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The Boy Runaway; or The Buccaneer of the Bay.

A ROMANCE OF NEW YORK AND ITS WATERS IN THE WAR OF 1812.

BY LIEUT. HARRY DENNIES PERRY, U. S. N.



"I COULD ESCAPE BY RUNNING FOR THE ENGLISH FLEET; BUT, TO SAVE MY NECK FROM THE GALLOWES,
I WOULD NOT SEEK SAFETY THROUGH AN ENEMY!"

The Boy Runaway;

OR,
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in the War of 1812.

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CHAPTER I.

THE DEATH-BLOW.

"TALBOT TREVOR, you lie!"

Crisp and stern fell the words from the lips of a youth of eighteen, who, unobserved, had approached a group of men, earnestly conversing in front of an old inn, still standing upon the shores of Staten Island, and commanding a grand view of New York harbor, with the city in the distance, and in another direction the lower Bay, Sandy Hook, and the blue ocean beyond.

Then, at the time of which I write, 1812, the island was the home of well-to-do farmers, fishermen, and the rendezvous of deep-sea sailors, and not, as now, dotted with lordly country-seats and villages.

And the "Keel and Anchor Inn" was the "neutral ground" where the rich landowner, villagers and seamen met to discuss the affairs of the nation and the war with Great Britain, which was then being waged, with vigor, on both sea and land.

In the midst of the group thus assembled upon the piazza of the Keel and Anchor, was a young man of twenty-three perhaps, stylishly dressed, and with a face marked by reckless dissipation and vice; but, the son and heir of old Judge Trevor, the wealthiest landowner on the island, and a prominent man, he was courted by many, and feared by others, until he delighted in being looked up to as a superior by those with whom he came in contact.

He had just called to the landlord, Bruce Benedict, styled "Colonel," from having served in the militia years before, to give them a glass all round, when he made the remark that brought the stinging words:

"Talbot Trevor, you lie!"

All started at the ringing voice of Carl Manners, and stepped aside as he forced his way toward Talbot Trevor, who turned as pale as death, as he answered:

"I said, Carl Manners, that your father was a traitor in the war of the Revolution, and that you, his son, would prove one in the present struggle."

"And I again hurl the lie in your teeth," was the fearless retort, while the crowd swayed to and fro with excitement, for both young men were well known as possessing pluck.

With a cry of rage Talbot Trevor sprang toward the youth, who received him with a well-directed blow upon the temple, that caused him to fall like one dead.

"Bravo! you have an iron fist, Master Carl, and you have punished him well for calling you a traitor," said Ben Buntline, an old fisherman. "He has killed him."

The speaker was Colonel Benedict, who bent over the prostrate form.

"No, no, he cannot be dead! I meant not to kill him," cried Carl Manning, springing forward and kneeling beside the body of the man he had struck down.

Tearing open his vest and shirt he placed his hand upon his heart—it had ceased to beat; the pulse of life was stilled forever!

"Great God! I have killed him, and his life is upon my hands," and the youth staggered to his feet, his face as white as the one that looked up toward the blue skies and yet saw them not.

"And I arrest you, Carl Manners, as a murderer."

It was the village constable that spoke, and he laid his hand heavily upon the shoulder of the youth, who struck it off, and cried:

"Never! I meant not to kill him, Dick Dawes, and you shall not arrest me."

"But I will, so resist at your peril," and the officer drew a pistol from his pocket.

But, with the spring of a tiger, Carl Manners was upon him, the weapon was wrenched from his hand, and presenting it at the startled crowd, he cried:

"Stand from my way, all of you."

They shrunk back from his flashing eye, and opened a way for him, and he strode toward the street, running by the side of the inn, and where he paused, as though undecided what to

do, when a voice, as clear and sweet as a bird's, called out:

"Mount Trevor's horse, Carl, quick! and ride to the cove yonder, where Ben Buntline's sloop lies at anchor."

Carl Manners glanced quickly up at the window, from whence came the voice, and beheld the beautiful face of Agnes Benedict, the inn-keeper's daughter; she pointed down the shore, where, three-quarters of a mile away, the little fishing craft lay at anchor.

Waving his hand to the maiden, he bounded toward the rack, where the blooded mare of Talbot Trevor was hitched, and throwing himself into the saddle, he darted away like the wind, just as the constable, Dick Dawes, commanded all who were armed to fire upon him.

A few scattering shots went flying after the fugitive, whose derisive laughter all heard, as they did his cry:

"Agnes, see my mother and tell her all."

"I will, Carl," reached his ears as he dashed away, while Dick Dawes shouted:

"Give chase, men, or he'll reach the sloop and run out to the English fleet yonder."

"The ferts will bring him to," cried one, while another answered:

"They may not, and he's a bold lad and will take his chances."

Then the inn stables were stripped of their horses, and, three minutes after the departure of Carl Manners, half a score of horsemen were in rapid pursuit, vowing to bring back the daring youth, dead or alive.

CHAPTER II.

A FEUD BETWEEN THEM.

A MILE from the Keel and Anchor Inn, and nestling away under the shelter of a wooded hill, was the home of the widow Manners, a dignified, sad-faced woman who had passed the meridian of life, but who yet bore traces of having possessed in early life great beauty of face and form.

Just at the breaking out of the war of the Revolution, she had come to America, a mere girl-wife, having fled from her grand old English home with the man she loved, and whose elder brother, an heir to a noble title and vast estates, she had been destined by her father, an earl, to marry.

But, preferring love to title, she had left home and kindred, and in America had found a haven of refuge.

Though allying himself with the Americans, Mark Manners would not take up arms against the English, and for this reason he was often spoken of as a traitor and a spy, yet certainly without cause, and a successful merchant, these aspersions were, after the close of the war, remembered only by a few who desired to keep the flame of hatred burning brightly.

For a long time no child was born to the house of Manners; but at last a son and heir made glad the hearts of his parents, and, three years after, a baby sister put in an appearance, to the great delight of little Carl; but, in the midst of their joy, Mark Manners and his wife had misfortune fall upon them, as a severe storm at sea wrecked the merchant's ship, in which his all was invested, and a fire swept away his dwelling place; but with a brave heart, he put his shoulder to the wheel to once more climb the ladder of fortune, and the future looked bright once more for awhile; then Mrs. Manners was called upon to mourn the loss of her idolized husband, whom death claimed in the very prime of life.

With what was left out of the wreck of her fortune, Mrs. Manners retired to Staten Island, to dwell upon the little farm her husband had given her, years before; and, too proud to return to her relatives in England, she devoted herself to the education of her two children, Carl and Clarette, and the improvement of her home and its hundred surrounding acres.

To that pretty cottage home I ask the reader to accompany me, upon the afternoon that opens this story, and a short hour before the death-blow that made Carl Manners a fugitive.

"Why, Carl, your game-bag is empty," said Mrs. Manners, as her son came toward them, gun in hand, and threw himself into a chair.

"I know it, mother, for I did not go hunting; I have been yonder on the hill, looking out upon the sea and thinking," said the youth, who, for his age was a fine specimen of physical development, and as handsome as an Adonis.

"Ah, Carl, I fear I know too well your thoughts; you wish to become a soldier in the war now going on with England."

"Not a soldier, mother, but a sailor, for you know the fishermen have told you that I am a

natural born seaman, and my studies in navigation fit me for the navy. Oh, mother, if you would only consent to my going on some vessel of war, or privateer, I would be happy indeed."

"Why Carl, you are strangely earnest in this desire; what has caused it?"

"Mother, it is whispered around that father was English in his ideas during the Revolution, and folks say that I would serve Great Britain did I get half a chance, and I wish to prove that I am heart and soul an American, and I can do so if you will only give your consent, for there is a privateer being fitted out over at Perth Amboy, and Hugh Trevor is to command her, while Talbot is to be a junior officer, and I certainly am a better sailor than either of them, but then, as their father fits out the vessel, I cannot expect to be more than a midshipman."

"My son, I would rather you would go as a common soldier, than an officer with the Trevors, for you know something of their past and ours, but not all."

"Captain Trevor, the father of those two young men, commanded my husband's vessel, which was lost at sea, and some say he did it in revenge to ruin your father, who knocked him down for insulting me; still, he sailed as captain of the clipper ship, and it went down, while he and the crew escaped, and while we lost all, he suddenly became rich, though we would not believe the stories that he had sold the cargo to coast smugglers and then scuttled the vessel."

"Wishing to bury the past, I have never refused to allow you and Clarette to associate with the Trevors, for Nellie I like, though the boys are wild and dissipated; but, somehow, I have ever dreaded that trouble would yet come between our name and theirs."

"Mother, I do not like either Hugh or Talbot Trevor, for they are overbearing, haughty, and sneer at all who do not possess the wealth they do, and I think it is Hugh's admiration alone for sister Clarette, that has prevented him from insulting me; but, I will not go on their privateer, though I am determined to be at sea within the month. Now, I will run up to the inn and see what is the news."

"Carl, if you are going up to the Keel and Anchor, please ask Agnes to come down and spend the day to-morrow," and Clarette Manners, a fairy-like little beauty of sixteen, ran out upon the porch as Carl walked away.

"I will tell her, Clarette," he answered, and kissing his hand to his mother and sister, he strode along in the direction of the inn, little dreaming of the insulting words that would greet his ears upon his arrival, and the fatal consequences it would lead to.

CHAPTER III.

THE FLIGHT FOR LIFE.

THE steed upon which Carl Manners was mounted, was noted as the fastest on the island, and Constable Dawes had little hope of overtaking the fugitive on horseback; but he knew that it would be hard work for the youth to raise the sail and anchor of the sloop alone, and get under way before they could reach the little craft, so they urged their animals on to their greatest speed.

But, like the very wind the horse ridden by Carl sped along, his rider pale, but determined, and a grim smile upon his face, as he patted the animal and muttered:

"Ah, my brave beast, you little know that you are aiding the escape of the one who has just killed your master."

Riding at the speed he did, it was but a few minutes before Carl reached the shore, and at a point where a skiff lay upon the sands.

Springing from the saddle, by an effort of his great strength he shoved the boat off into the water and sprang in, at the same time tearing up a seat to act as a paddle, for there were no oars in the skiff.

Hardly had he gotten forty feet from the land when up dashed Dick Dawes and his posse, and threw themselves from their horses.

"Come back and surrender, Carl Manners, or I will fire upon you!" yelled the constable, and a mocking laugh was the only answer.

"Come back or I fire!"

But Carl paddled the more vigorously, and raising his pistol, the constable fired, the ball striking the water at one side of the boat.

"You are a bad shot, Dick Dawes; try again!" was the reckless answer, and, seizing another pistol from one of his posse, the officer fired again,—this time the bullet striking the boat.

"You are improving, Dick; keep it up," was the cool admonition of Carl, and the constable

did keep it up, his third hot piercing through the board in the youth's hand.

But, undaunted, the fearless fugitive called back:

"It's me you want to hit, Dick Dawes, not the water, boat and paddle."

"I'll have you yet, youngster," shouted the constable, and he urged his horse into the water to swim after the receding boat.

The horse swam well, but dropping his paddle, Carl hastily raised the pistol he had wrenched from the constable at the inn, and cried:

"No, you keep off, Dick Dawes!"

"You'll not dare fire on an officer of the law," answered the constable, and he urged his swimming horse still faster.

"I dare do anything when hunted down; keep off, I say!"

But the officer did not heed the pistol flashed, and with a wild scream the horse sunk beneath the waters, leaving his now frightened rider struggling above him.

"I could have shot you as easily as the horse, Dick Dawes, and I will, if you do not keep off," and shoving his hand into the pocket of his hunting suit, the youth hastily reloaded the pistol.

Convinced now that Carl would kill him, the constable swam back toward the shore, but, determined not to give up yet, he called out:

"There is an old skiff lying around yonder bend; get it, and we'll board the sloop."

Several started to obey just as Carl ran alongside the little craft and sprung on board.

With his knife he cut the nettles that bound the mainsail and jib; quickly the canvas was set, and the anchor raised upon the deck just as a boat-load of men from the inn rounded one point of the cove, and the constable's companions appeared around the other in the skiff.

A cheer burst from the different crews, for they expected to head the sloop off ere she could clear the cove; but, as though to favor his flight, a squall swept over the island, and the young sailor met it skilfully with his helm, and then sent the sloop flying away toward open water.

"Aho, Carl, that's my craft, remember," cried old Ben Buntline, from one of the boats.

"I know it, Ben, and if I wreck it, or do not bring it back, mother will pay you its value. Good-by, old man!" and Carl waved his hand to the fisherman whom he always had liked, and with whom he had passed many a day out in deep water.

"Good-by, my boy! Is yer goin' ter the British fleet?"

"Ben Buntline, I am no traitor to my country," answered Carl in ringing tones, and he sunk down into the cock-pit, as he saw that Dick Dawes was preparing to fire upon him, as were also the men in the other boat, when the sloop would pass between them.

It was a dangerous gantlet to run, but Carl Manners knew no fear, and still holding the little sloop on her course, until the waves swept half the deck to leeward, he watched his enemies with a smile upon his handsome face.

"Carl Manners, you shall rue this day, for I shall track you to the death!"

The voice of the speaker was clear and determined, and, as he stood up in the boat that had come down from the inn, Carl Manners recognized the dark, cruel face of Hugh Trevor, a man not yet twenty-five, but one whom few loved, and all feared, for he led a wild and reckless life.

As the sloop passed like a flying bird between the two boats, Hugh Trevor fired, and the splinters were seen to fly from the tiller, only a few inches from Carl's hand; but he did not flinch, or let his helm move an atom, while his mocking laugh, brought upon him a fusillade from both skiffs, and angry curses, as his pursuers now saw that he had escaped them.

"Remember, Carl Manners: it is your life or mine when we meet again," called out Hugh Trevor.

"Ay, ay, Hugh Trevor! On land or sea, your life or mine," answered Carl, and he headed his little vessel for the Narrows, at the same time turning his eyes astern, and glancing back toward the land.

Over his face came a troubled look then, for upon the bluff he saw three forms he knew well: his mother, standing with outstretched arms gazing after him, as though striving to drag him back to her embrace, and his sister Clarette, with her head bowed upon the shoulder of Agnes Benedict, whose presence with them told him that they knew all—knew that he had the stain of a life upon his hands, and that he, Carl Manners, the devoted son and brother, was a fugitive from justice—a hunted man!

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERIOUS SCHOONER.

WHEN Carl headed for the Narrows, he did not like the appearance of soldiers upon the ramparts of the two forts that guarded the passage to the city, for it was evident they had observed the sloop and the two boats in chase, and the crews of which were making every effort to attract the attention of the soldiery toward the flying craft.

"Yes, they are going to open on me, but I shall hold on and trust to luck," muttered Carl, as he saw the soldiers running to and fro, and heard the roll of the drums calling them to their posts.

"It is rapidly getting dark, and this good breeze is driving me along like a race-horse. Ha! there comes the shot for me to heave to," and, as he spoke, there came a puff of smoke from an embrasure; immediately followed the deep boom of a heavy gun and the roar of the shot, which struck the water a few yards ahead of him, and, ricocheting, buried itself in the green bank on the Staten Island shore.

But the daring youth did not heed the hint to come to, and a second shot came from the other fort; still he held on.

"Now I'll catch it hot and fast," he thought, as the guns roared incessantly, and the iron messengers fell thick around him, yet not one striking his flying sloop, though they dashed the spray all over him.

With stern face and unflinching hand he held on his course, the size of his little craft being in his favor, and the speed at which it was going preventing true aim, while darkness was swiftly coming on, and would hide him from view.

But then, another danger awaited him, as a guard-boat from the city, and en route to the forts, had been spoken by Hugh Trevor, and at once bore away in pursuit, with that young man, Constable Dawes, and old Ben Buntline upon her decks.

Carl saw the boats run alongside the schooner, which, a moment after, crowded on canvas and stood on in pursuit, and he said half aloud:

"I could escape by running for the English fleet; but, to save my neck from the gallows, I would not seek safety through an enemy. I will head for the Highlands and take to the shore," and he changed his course so as to cross the Lower Bay to the Navesink Bluffs, dimly visible in the distance, while the forts, finding he was out of range, and, in fact, barely visible in the gathering gloom, ceased firing, and left his capture to the armed cutter that was rushing ahead in hot chase.

Having once gotten out of sight from the land, Carl again changed his course, running in toward Staten Island, hoping thereby to elude his pursuers, who would naturally keep seaward after him, thinking he would make for the English fleet off the harbor.

As he swept in nearer the land, the cutter passed through the Narrows, and held on in the direction in which Carl had been sailing when the darkness hid him from view, and it was with a sigh of relief that the brave youth felt that he had escaped from those who he knew would show him little mercy if taken, for though he had merely defended himself against Talbot Trevor, and had not intended to seriously injure him, the blow had proved fatal, and he knew the family of the slain man, being rich and powerful, would use every effort to have him die on the gallows.

Shortening sail, Carl ran around the shore for some distance, mechanically holding the tiller, for now that the excitement of the chase was over, he knew not which way to turn or go, for he was penniless, and could form no plan for the future.

A short while before, and he had held high hopes for a brilliant future; now, all was gloom ahead, and the past had only regret.

As though Fate guided his craft, he suddenly found that he had run into a little cove, surrounded by high, wooded points of land.

He knew the place well, for often before had he been in that secure and lonely retreat, with no habitation within half a league.

He was about to put his helm down and stand out of the cove, and once more head for the Highlands, with a half-formed idea of going to Philadelphia on foot, and there seeking service, when he heard the creaking of a block, followed by a human voice, and within a cable's length ahead of him.

Instantly he put about, and then, finding that his sloop had evidently not been seen, he ran close in under the shadow of the land, and dropped his anchor, while he peered into the darkness across the cove.

"We'll, what can that vessel be doing there,

I wonder?" he muttered, as he beheld indistinctly the tall masts of a schooner, lying close in against the opposite shore.

"Ha! I have it; they must be smugglers. I have heard that this cove had once been their haunts; but I shall see, and if they are—"

He said no more, but poled his sloop until he could spring from the stern upon the shore, and, armed with a short stick and Dick Dawes's pistol, he cautiously began to make the circuit of the inlet.

Keeping under the shadow of the overhanging trees, he walked along the beach, until he was within sixty feet of the vessel, which was made fast to an old ruined dock that had not been used since Revolutionary days, so it was said.

And upon this dock were a dozen men, tall and in suppressed tones, and moving to and fro from the shore to the vessel.

"There is some devil's work going on there, but I will ferret it out," he determined, and with the greatest caution he approached nearer, until he crouched down within ten feet of two men who were standing apart from the rest, and every word they spoke came distinctly to his ears.

As he came to a halt, the shorter one of the two was speaking:

"I tell you, Darrell, I don't half like this business," he said, while the other, with a light laugh responded:

"Don't get chicken-hearted, Ferris, now that all is at once ready to start. Why, we don't of the enemy, only furnish them ammunition for their stomachs, and I informed you that the English admiral, when I went out, two weeks ago, told me he would pay one thousand pounds for the cargo of provisions, for it's been many a long day since any one in the fleet has tasted chicken, fresh meat, or a vegetable, and I give you half for the use of your schooner and the things you have bought, and which, all told, haven't cost you a hundred pounds."

"True, but I take all the risk of losing my vessel, should we be discovered, and buy the provisions, and you get the lion's share, Darrell."

"It's my plan, Ferris; but I'll not be mean. I'll call it another hundred pounds. Now, the turkeys, geese and chickens, are all aboard stowed down in the hold, while the barrels of vegetables are on deck, so we only wait the fresh wind when will they arrive, for we must get off to-night, and back to-morrow night?"

"The carts are coming, and should be here within two hours, Darrell."

"Good, so we can get off by midnight, and with this breeze can reach the fleet in two hours; it is nine o'clock now," and the speaker held his watch up to a light of the cigar, which also illumined his face.

"It is Ned Darrell, of An-Loy, and the other is Captain Ferris, whose schooner was in the coasting trade before the war; but I shall circumvent their little game, be the consequence what they may to me," and Carl Manners cautiously away from the spot, climbed the steep hill, and gained an old, long unused road.

"It is nine o'clock, and I have six miles to go to the village; but I'll make it," and at a swinging trot Carl set off across the island, to return to the very place from which he had fled a few hours before, and where he knew that bitter foes awaited him.

CHAPTER V.

A SURPRISE ALL AROUND.

THE top room of the Keel and Anchor Inn was a scene of wild excitement, after dark the evening following the flight of Carl Manners, for the villagers had all assembled there to hear over the exciting incidents that had occurred.

To all of them Carl was well known, and with very few exceptions he was well liked, for his genial manners, known courage, and kind some face had won him respect among the lower classes.

Yet there were some few, who, from policy, sided with the Trevors, and thought that the youth should be hanged, if captured.

The body of Talbot Trevor had been taken to his father's fine old mansion in the hills, and the grief of the old sea captain was great, for with all his faults he dearly loved his son, and imprecations most bitter he poured out upon the head of the slayer of his boy, while poor Nellie Trevor, in the quiet of her own room, wept with two-fold sorrow, for she mourned her brother dead, and at the hand of one who had stolen from her her girlish heart, for Carl was her beau ideal, and mingled in all her thoughts for the future, and many pleasant memories of the past, for, though the Captain

and Mrs. Manners were not on friendly terms, their children often met at social gatherings.

While the discussion at the inn was waxing warm, there suddenly entered Hugh Trevor, Constable Dawes, and Ben Buntline, whom the reader will remember as having boarded the armed cutter and continued on in pursuit.

"Well, have you got him?" asked Colonel Benedict, with an anxious look upon his face, as the three men entered.

"Curse him! no! he escaped to the British fleet," said Hugh Trevor, who was strangely like his brother Talbot.

"Yes, he got away from us, and he almost deserved it for his nerve, for he ran the gantlet of the forts without letting his bows sway an inch, and is as game a boy as ever I want to see," put in the constable, while Ben Buntline added:

"Yes, mates, he give us the go-by, and I hadn't sorry, even if Master Hugh here does look mad, for I holds an affection for the boy, and if the Skip-long turns up all right, I'll be content; but I does love that leetle craft, and specially since I see what Carl made her do; I wear, I didn't know 'twas in her, though I'd never found fault with her; but come, constable, let us have a drink with Master Hugh."

"Yes, all come up and join us: fill a bumper all around, colonel, and then let me have my horse, for I must go home. Oh, curses on you, Carl Manners, for the sorrow you have brought upon our home!" and Hugh Trevor dashed off a glass of brandy, to hide the tears that welled into his eyes, for his young brother had been very dear to him!

"Here's that you catch him, Master Hugh," said a burly fisherman, quaffing off his drink.

"And here's that you don't," said Ben Buntline, bluntly, and half a cheer followed his words, at which Hugh Trevor's dark eyes flashed fire; but, as though feeling that Carl had the most friends present, he smothered down his temper, and said earnestly:

"I'll yet meet him, and I vow it under heaven! but he is free for awhile, as he has carried out poor Talbot's words, turned traitor and gone to the English fleet."

"Hugh Trevor, you lie!"

In spite of the nerves of iron of many present, all started at the words, and turning quickly, beheld the tall, splendid form of Carl Manners standing in the open doorway, his face calm, but his black eyes on fire, as they turned upon the man who had denounced him as a traitor to his country.

"Carl Manners!"

Every tongue spoke the name, and every eye was fixed upon him, while, pistol in hand, Hugh Trevor sprung forward, crying:

"Murderer, move one step, and you die!"

"Yes, my game youth, surrender to the law," and Dick Dawes, the constable, also sprung toward Carl, his drawn pistol covering his heart.

"You are a fool, Hugh Trevor, to think I would place myself in your power without a cause," and turning to the constable, Carl exclaimed:

"You, Dick Dawes, I surrender myself; but, just now I wish to see you upon a matter of more importance than my personal safety."

"It must be considerably important, Carl, for I'm afraid you've got yourself into a hanging scrap; but I accept the surrender, so tell me what it is has brought you back here, after giving us all such a clear go-by?"

"Beckoning the constable one side, Carl told him of his discovery and the reason of his coming back.

"Well, boy, if any man says you is a traitor after this, I'll give him the lie to his face, for you could have gone to the British fleet, and if you didn't you could have gotten away; but to come back here and give yerself up to catch traitors, is what I calls gilt-edge patriotism, it is."

"You have no time to lose, Dick Dawes, so get your crew together," quickly said Carl.

"True; well, let me see, we'd better tell Colonel Benedict and Hugh Trevor about it, if you are willing."

"Certainly; to serve my country I sink all private feeling against Mr. Trevor; but what you do must be done at once."

The constable beckoned to Hugh Trevor and Colonel Benedict to approach, and in a few words told them what Carl had made known to him.

"Sure he didn't reach the English fleet and is laying a trap to catch us all in!" asked Hugh Trevor with a sneer.

"It is cowardly to insult me when I am in your power, Hugh Trevor," retorted Carl, his

eyes flashing fire, while the colonel remarked quickly:

"Now, Trevor, don't go too far."

"That's the music, colonel; I for one am willing to trust Carl, and if Mr. Trevor don't wish to join company on the expedition, he'd better say so."

"Oh, I'll go; only it is well to be cautious."

"It is not well to delay," was the blunt reminder of Carl, and the constable turned to him and asked:

"Well, have you thought of any plan, Carl?"

"Yes; there is a trim-looking schooner lying at anchor off the shore here, and she could run there with this breeze in an hour, and we could head the craft off."

"How many men has the smuggler?" asked Hugh Trevor.

"I counted twenty."

"Then we should have double that number, for they will make a stout resistance. Ha! I have it; the cutter that gave chase to you, Manners, is anchored down by the Narrows, so we can go there in a small boat."

"The very thing, Trevor; and you will act as pilot, Carl?" asked the colonel.

"Yes, I will do anything in my power; but, let us lose no time, for it is now after ten," and Carl pointed to an old-fashioned clock that stood behind the bar.

In five minutes the four men left the tap-room, to the great surprise and curiosity of the two-score villagers gathered there, and rapidly wended their way to the shore, where a skiff, belonging to the inn, was at once taken possession of.

Hugh Trevor and Carl Manners being skilled oarsmen at once seized the oars, and sent the light boat flying down the harbor, and in a short while the long hull and raking masts of the cutter came in view.

"Boat ahoy!" hailed the watchful look out, and Carl answered promptly:

"Important news for the captain."

The order was given to come alongside, and the four were ushered into the comfortable cabin, where sat a young man of twenty-six, with a frank, fearless face, and a form that looked well in his naval uniform.

"Ah! back again so soon? You must have news of the fugitive," he said pleasantly, recognizing the constable and Hugh Trevor.

"He is with us, captain, and this is he; but he gave himself up out of patriotism, for he has news for you."

At the constable's words, Royal Dean, the cutter's commander, turned his gaze with unmistakable admiration upon the handsome face of Carl Manners, and said:

"You do not look like the desperate fellow I was led to believe."

"The devil is not as black as he is painted, sir; but I fled under the impulse of the moment to avoid being thrown into prison, and I have returned to make known a discovery I made, and which is important for you to know: in brief, a large schooner is now on the Staten Island shore, loaded down with provisions to run out to the British fleet in the offing, and she is to sail at midnight."

"Ha! this is important news, and it is now eleven o'clock. Ho! on deck, there!"

"Ay, ay, sir," responded a young midshipman, appearing in the companionway.

"Tell Lieutenant Murdock to slip the cable and get sail on the schooner at once. Now, sir, where is this smuggler schooner?"

"I will pilot you there, sir, and with this breeze we can make it in an hour."

"And in return you ask freedom from arrest for your crime, I suppose?"

"Lieutenant Dean, I committed no crime, for I had no intent to kill Talbot Trevor, but to punish him for an insult, and I ask no favors of any man, for I am a prisoner in the constable's hands, and am willing to undergo my trial," returned Carl, proudly.

"And you will end on a rope," sneered Hugh Trevor.

"Mr. Trevor, you doubtless feel bitter toward this youth, but you shall not insult him on board my ship, sir," was the stern rejoinder of Royal Dean, and he led the way on deck, where they found the schooner was already under way.

"Mr. Manners, for I believe such is your name, if you will give me your parole not to attempt to escape, you shall have the freedom of the vessel while on board, and I will make you pilot for the expedition," and the schooner's commander turned to Carl, who answered promptly:

"Willingly, sir, do I give my word; now will you have the schooner put under all sail she will bear?" and Carl stepped to the wheel with

the air of one who fully understood every duty devolving upon him, while the cutter rushed out through the narrows under pressure of a ten knot breeze.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAID OF PERTH.

ONCE through the Narrows, and having signaled the forts, to show what vessel it was running out, the cutter headed for the secret cove, and after a rapid run, was suddenly put square before the wind and dashed into the little land-locked haven, just as the smuggler schooner was discovered beating out.

That the smugglers were taken wholly by surprise, was evident, for the schooner fell off her course badly, and then came up into the wind until her sails fluttered, as though her commander was undecided what to do, while the greatest excitement was visible upon her decks.

But, having the advantage of the cutter by being already upon her tack, and some few hundred yards ahead, her commander seemed determined to stand on his way and make a run for it.

But having discovered his prey, Royal Dean would not be thrown off the scent, and he gave ringing orders to put about, which Carl executed in masterly style, and ere the schooner had obtained a good offing out of the cove, her armed pursuer was in hot chase.

"You are certain that is the schooner, Mr. Manners?" asked Royal Dean, eying her through his night glass.

"Yes, sir; I am sure, for I know Captain Atram Ferris's schooner well, and she's a witch for sailing."

"So I see, and I'll have to bring her to with my guns. Get the bow chasers ready, Mr. Murdock."

"What! is that schooner the Maid of Perth, Carl?" asked old Colonel Benedict.

"It is, sir."

"Then you had better not let her get a lead, lieutenant, for she's the fastest craft in these waters, and as rakish and trim as a pirate."

"You are right, colonel. I tried to purchase her for a privateer, but Ferris wouldn't sell her: he'll wish he had now. By Jove, how she gains on us," exclaimed Hugh Trevor.

And it was true, that the "Maid of Perth" was walking away from the fleet cutter in splendid style.

"Well, I thought this craft could show her heels to anything afloat, but yonder schooner shows her the way right nobly, and we are on our best sailing points, too. Throw a shot over her, Mr. Murdock."

Mart Murdock, the dashing young lieutenant of the cutter, was only too glad to obey, and the flash of the gun, the heavy boom, and the rushing of the iron shot commingled.

"Well aimed, Mart! It struck in a dead line ahead; if she don't come to, fire at her," cried Royal Dean.

"It's a pity to hurt the craft, too, for she belongs to the captain's pretty daughter Madge, whom the villagers call the Maid of Perth—all that shot told," continued Colonel Benedict, as the second discharge of the gun cut away the main-top-mast of the schooner, bringing the wreck and sail upon the deck with a crash.

"He still holds on; he is stubborn; so pepper him well, Murdock," ordered Royal Dean.

"Oh, it's not Ferris, I'll bet, for if he had nerve he'd 'a' been privateering with his schooner afore this. It's Ned Darrell as has the nerve yonder, for Carl says he's the one who planned the expedition," and the constable made a glass out of his fist and gazed upon the flying schooner, while the two bow guns now kept up a rapid fire, some of the shots falling harmlessly ahead and about her, and now and then one striking with telling effect.

But all the time the schooner still held on her course, and without her top-sails was gaining steadily upon the swift cutter.

"Here, this won't do, or she'll get away from us yet! At the guns there! Stand by to give her a broadside! Now, Mr. Manners, let her come round—steady—fire!"

The six broadside guns of the cutter now burst forth with a terrific roar, and the crashing of timbers and cries of the wounded told how well they were aimed; but the Maid of Perth still held on defiantly, and Royal Dean called out:

"Give her the starboard broadside, or we'll have the whole British fleet turning in to her aid. Now, Mr. Manners! steady—fire!"

Again the fleet schooner was the recipient of a terrible fire, but without bringing her to, a fact that caused the constable to remark:

"That Ned Darrell is a devil, and no mistake; but hark; there is trouble on board there."

Loud and angry voices were now heard coming from on board the Maid of Perth, and several pistol-shots and the clash of steel followed.

"Yes, they are having a row among themselves; now she is ours, for the crew have mutinied against the officers—ha! there she comes up into the wind now!" and, as the schooner lay to, a loud cheer burst from the lips of the cutter's crew, and found an echo from the quarter-deck.

A few moments more and Carl Manners skillfully laid the cutter alongside of the Maid of Perth, and followed Royal Dean and his crew upon her decks.

A sad sight presented itself to their gaze, for the beautiful schooner was badly scarred with shot marks, and half a dozen dead and as many wounded lay upon the deck, showing how true had been Mart Murdock's aim.

"Well, sir, what have you to say for yourself?" and Lieutenant Dean spoke sternly to Captain Ferris, who, the object of misery, stood by the cabin companionway.

"I am innocent, sir; I was dragged into this scrape, sir, by another man, for until you gave chase, I believed I was carrying a load of provisions to the American fleet."

Carl Manners knew that Captain Ferris told a deliberate lie, and yet he would not betray him, for the lovely face of his daughter Madge, one whom all who know her loved, came before him, and he asked:

"Where is Ned Darrell, for he is the one who betrayed you into this scrape, Captain Ferris."

"True, my son, true; it was his venture, and he has escaped."

"Escaped! when and how, sir?" asked Royal Dean.

"You see, he made me stand on until the crew mutinied, and then, when we luffed up and laid to, he took the light yawl and his men and rowed away."

"Lower the boats, Murdock, and make a circuit to see if you can find that renegade," ordered the cutter's commander, and turning to Captain Ferris he continued:

"Captain, I fear you have lost your schooner by this night's work, and it is my duty to hold you and your crew prisoners;" and calling to a junior officer he ordered him to look after the men from their captured vessel, and go on board with a crew to run her up to the city.

In twenty minutes more the boats returned unsuccessful in their search, and the two vessels stood back toward the city, Carl Manners leaning over the bulwarks and gazing upon the dark shores, with sad and bitter thoughts, for he knew not what the future held in store for him.

CHAPTER VII. THE TRIUMPH OF HATE.

THE sun had not yet melted the dew from off the flowers, the morning following the scenes related in the foregoing chapters, when a horse-woman, alone, and with her dark hair floating far down her back, rode at full speed down the road running along the Staten Island shore, and turned into the gateway leading to the cottage home of widow Manners.

Throwing herself from her panting horse she approached the door just as Mrs. Manners and Clarette came out upon the piazza, their faces pale, and eyes red from weeping.

"Oh Clarette! they have taken Carl to prison," burst from the lips of Agnes Benedict, and with a moan of anguish Mrs. Manners sunk down upon a rustic settee, while Clarette said:

"They captured him then?"

"No, he returned and gave himself up, and the cause that prompted it, father says, should set him free, for he discovered Ned Darrell smuggling provisions out on the Maid of Perth, Captain Ferris's schooner you know, and he came back, told what he had seen, and father, that hateful Hugh Trevor and Constable Dick Dawes went with Carl on board the cutter and the smuggler was captured after a hot chase."

"We heard heavy firing in the night; and my son returned to lead this expedition against the smugglers?"

"He did, Mrs. Manners, and it is to be hoped he will not be tried for the murder of Talbot Trevor, for, as I told you, he did not mean to kill him, for I saw it all."

"Bless you, dear Agnes; but they have taken Carl to the city?"

"Yes, they landed father and Hugh Trevor at the inn, and then went on up to town, carrying Carl and Dick Dawes: but father says Lieutenant Dean will befriend him all in his power, for the cutter would never have cap-

tured the Maid of Perth, if it had not been for Carl."

"Poor boy, I hope all will come well, but those Trevors are revengeful, as I know, and will spend half their fortune to convict him of murder: come, Clarette, let us go at once to the city and see your poor brother."

"And I will accompany you, if you wish," said Agnes Benedict, and it was arranged that they should have breakfast at once, and then let Clark, the farm hand, sail them up to town in Carl's sailboat, which was at anchor in a little cove not far distant from the cottage.

But though the fond mother brought comfort to the heart of the prisoner, whom the three ladies found already in jail and in irons, it was evident that there was a bitter feeling against Carl, for the friends of the Trevors were already at work to injure him all in their power.

And so much harm did the hate and money of Hugh Trevor work, that when brought to trial Carl saw at once, as did the few steadfast friends who clung to him, that he was destined to suffer for the death-blow he had given, no matter what had been his intention, or that he had acted in self-defense.

With consummate skill the attorney for the prosecution turned the tide against the prisoner by referring to Carl's father as a traitor, and there were witnesses to swear to any lie that the Trevors originated.

And worse still, even the part played by the gallant youth in the discovery of the secret expedition and capture of the Maid of Perth, was turned against him, for, purchased by the gold of Hugh Trevor, some of the crew of the schooner swore that Carl had been one of their number, and had only betrayed them, hoping to escape trial for the killing of Talbot Trevor thereby.

With a pale, but fearless face, Carl heard the verdict against him:

"Guilty of murder; but recommended to the court for mercy, on account of his youth."

A low moan came from the poor mother, while Hugh Trevor scowled, for he had hoped to have him die on the gallows.

But the judge was merciful, if a life sentence instead of death can be called a mercy, and Carl Manners was led out of the court room, to go out of the world forever, while behind him echoed wails of anguish from his mother and sister, that were sweet music to the ears of Hugh Trevor, whose gold and hate had triumphed over right and justice.

CHAPTER VIII.

MADGE, THE FAIR MAID OF PERTH.

In a pretentious brick mansion, still to be seen in the quaint old town of Perth Amboy, and whose grounds then sloped down to the water's edge, sat a beautiful girl one pleasant afternoon, a month after the trial and condemnation of Carl Manners.

Gazing out upon the water, and idly dreaming, her gaze suddenly fell upon a cat-rig sailboat approaching the shore, as if to land at the dock near the mansion.

Going out into the hall she took down a ship's spy-glass, and after turning it upon the boat, exclaimed in a joyful tone:

"It is father! God grant his troubles are over."

Running down to the landing, she was infolded in the arms of a man whom the reader will remember as Captain Abram Ferris.

"Oh father, you are back once more and no hateful constable with you."

"Yes, Madge, I am free, for nothing was found against me, thanks to the testimony of one whom I shall tell you of, and I was released, though the schooner is held in durance vile."

"Never mind the schooner, father, but come into the house," and Madge led her father away, for the sailboat, which was a regular ferry between New York and Perth Amboy, stood away for another landing.

When the two had entered the mansion, Captain Ferris said earnestly:

"Madge, it is a hard thing for a father to tell a daughter, but I must do so, for I need your aid; but I was guilty in that affair with Ned Darrell."

"I know it, father."

"You know it, and how?"

"From Ned Darrell himself," for he has been here."

"That man has been to my house?"

"Yes, father; he came in the disguise of a man-of-war's man, and it was the same old story, for he begged me to marry him, and—"

"Your answer, girl?"

"Father, do you doubt me?"

"No, no, my child; but tell me of his visit here."

"Well, I told him that there was a time when I had believed that I loved him; but his dishonorable career had changed my mind, and now I hated him."

"He then said that you were his partner in this smuggling affair."

"Too true, Madge; I thought to make a few hundred dollars in two nights, run little risk, and after all give no real aid to the enemy, for I only took fresh meats and vegetables; but I see now that I did very wrong; but did Darrell say more?"

"Yes, he told me he would turn state's evidence against you, swear you had plotted the whole thing, and send you to prison if I did not promise to marry him."

"Curse him! And your answer?"

"Why, I laughed at him, and dared him to do his worst, and he left, making all manner of threats against me."

"Bahl! he dare not show himself; tut, Madge, do you know how I escaped?"

"No, father."

"Through Carl Manners."

"Carl Manners! how I pity him and his poor mother and sister!"

"And so do I, for he is a noble fellow; but the Trevors' money bought lying witnesses against him, and he has gone to prison for life; but, Madge, that boy must not stay there, for when the cutter captured us that night, he did not betray me, though now I know he knew all, as he heard the conversation between Darrell and myself; and when they went to prison to take his testimony, he cleared me of all blame although he knew me to be thoroughly guilty."

"Do you wonder now that I wish to get him out of prison?"

"No, indeed, father, and I will aid you, but how is it to be done?"

"I'll tell you my idea, and then you can plot, for women are splendid at that; you know old Ben Buntline! Well, he was once a rich man, and he gave his daughter a high-toned education, same as I have given you, Madge, and spent a great deal of money upon her, which turned her head it seems, for when he lost his gold, and took to fishing for a living, she wouldn't give up luxury, and went to the bad, they say, for she ran off with one of these flashy gamblers we see on the Battery of evenings ogling the girls."

"Now Ben came down in the ferry with me from York, and he says that Carl Manners hadn't ought to remain in prison, and talking the matter over with him, we concluded we could serve him, for Ben saw his daughter today, and you know the boy saved her life once, when a sailboat upset with a party of them, and she's on our side, and says her lover can arrange it to get him out, but it's risky business; but if they succeed, we've got to help him out of the way of the law."

"I am more than willing, father, and I will think up some plan, and we'll talk it over; now let us go to supper—ha!" and Madge Ferris gave a startled cry as the tall form of a man suddenly confronted her.

It was Hugh Trevor, and Madge and her father both turned pale, fearing that he had overheard their conversation.

The young man was well known to the Fair Maid of Perth, as Madge was called by the villagers; in fact he was considered as one of the suitors for her hand, and recovering her presence of mind, she said pleasantly:

"Well, Mr. Trevor, I confess that you startled me; have you been knocking long at the door?"

"I had not time even to knock, Miss Madge, for seeing you, I took the liberty of stepping into the hall unannounced; but allow me to congratulate you, captain, upon your getting out of that unfortunate affair all right."

"Thank you, Mr. Trevor, or rather Captain Trevor, for I learn you are soon to run a privateer out."

"Yes, such is my intention, sir, for you know I had several years' experience in the navy; but it is about this I have come to see you and Mrs. Madge."

"And how may I be interested in your going a privateering, Mr. Trevor?" asked Madge.

"I was in hopes that you would at least regret I was going to face many dangers."

"Oh no, for I think it the duty of every man to serve his country, be the danger what it may."

"Bravo, Miss Madge, you are indeed an American girl, but it depends upon you whether I go now or not."

"May I ask how?" and Madge raised her eyes in haughty surprise.

"I will explain: the schooner my father purchased for me, and which is being overhauled up the Hudson, does not come up to my expectations, for she is neither fast, or very seaworthy. I've been told, and I desire to purchase the Maid of Perth, which I believe belongs to you, Miss Madge."

"Yes, my father presented her to me when she was built a year ago, and the villagers insisted upon naming her after me; but the trouble that Mr. Darrell got my father into, causes the schooner to be held by the Government."

"That I know; but the great influence of my father at headquarters, will get her released, if you are willing to sell her."

"But I am not willing to sell the Maid of Perth, Mr. Trevor, any more than I am to sell myself to the highest bidder," and Madge smiled as she saw that Hugh Trevor winced under the sly thrust that she gave him, for his "money and connections" had been the inducements he had offered when he asked her to marry him.

"Money will be no object, for I will pay a liberal price."

"And money is no object to me, sir: I will not part with the schooner."

"I am sorry, but I will have to get father to have the Government press the schooner into service for me," he said with some show of anger.

"Rich as you are, Mr. Trevor, the United States will not press the Maid of Perth into service to send out as a privateer; if the Government needed the schooner as a cruiser, I would give her up willingly."

"And this is your answer, Captain Ferris?" and Hugh Trevor turned to the father.

"Yes, for Madge owns the Maid, and can have all the say."

"I would be willing to make you my first officer, captain."

"Thank you; but I do not care to sail under you, Mr. Trevor: I am getting along in years, and the experience I had with the cutter was not enough for me, and I've got a little money, a good house, and a daughter to love, and I'm content," said Captain Ferris, with more hesitancy than he was in the habit of showing.

"Then I will bid you good-evening," and Hugh Trevor, not at all pleased with his reception and refusal, bowed himself to the door, where he hesitated and said:

"I suppose you heard the news over on our side of the island?"

"To what do you refer, sir?" asked Madge coldly.

"To the death of Mrs. Manners: she died of a broken heart, they say," responded the man coldly; but he shrunk back when Madge hissed forth:

"And as sure as there dwells a just God, Hugh Trevor, you are her murderer."

He strove to speak but the excited girl waved him away, and with her words ringing in his ears he left the house, and springing into his sail-boat sped swiftly away, while the maiden took her hand in menace, and exclaimed:

"Ah, Hugh Trevor, if Carl Manners does get me, beware of his just anger."

CHAPTER IX.

A DARING PLOT.

ACROSS the waters of the East river the silvery radiance of the rising moon cast a brilliant pathway, and threw heavy shadows from the hawking walls of Blackwell's Island, far out from the shore, while the villa-dotted banks of Long Island lay like a picture beyond.

Far off, from the then distant city of New York, came the rumble of busy life, mingling with the song of a sailor, floating out upon the waters, and coming from the deck of a passing schooner, gliding by under the pressure of the breeze that sprung up with the rising moon.

Upon the Manhattan Island (now New York City) shore, and opposite the huge prison, stood an old inn, where in years before many a gay party had assembled; but now a look of desolation rested upon all, for the lawn, sloping to the river, was overgrown with weeds, and no friendly, welcoming light gleamed from the windows.

Since this inn had also been a place of departure and arrival for persons going to and from the prison; but this was now in the past, as a more convenient spot, nearer the city had been selected, and with the departing patronage to this place, mine host had also departed, leaving the owls, bats and rats in full possession of the dilapidated structure.

And yet, upon the night when the quiet scene is painted for the eye of the reader, a human being sat upon the dilapidated porch, and looked with longing eyes upon the dark and frowning prison across the river.

Suddenly she started, for it was a woman who sat there alone, and quickly shrunk back in the shadow of the vine-clad porch, as the clatter of hoofs was heard coming down the grass-grown lane leading to the inn.

"Great Heaven! It is Gil Wright, the detective," and the woman shrunk further back into the shadows, as a horseman suddenly dashed up and drew rein in the moonlit space in front of the porch.

"Kate!"

"Why, it is you after all, Alston," and the woman sprang from her concealment, adding:

"Why, you are the image of Gil Wright."

"Yes, I 'made up' to represent him, Kate; but you must have been lonesome, waiting in this dreary old place," and the man glanced around him with a shudder.

"Yes, it is not a cheerful spot, and I have been here since sunset, when I dismissed the carriage at the head of the lane, expecting to find you here," and stepping out into the moonlight the woman stood by the side of the man, who had dismounted.

Her face was dark, her eyes black and as bright as diamonds, while her form was exquisitely molded. In fact, she was a beautiful, fascinating woman, yet bore the mark of dissipation upon her features.

Her companion, dressed in the uniform of a constable, was tall, graceful, and possessed a face of singular daring and determination; a reckless, yet not an evil, countenance.

Replying to the woman, he said:

"I expected to have come in the boat, Kate, but thought it best to ride, should your friend wish to take the chances of a horse to escape; and I came in this disguise, knowing how closely I resembled Gil Wright, the detective, and, if overhauled, could play his part and say the prisoner was in my custody."

"And a good idea it is, Alston; but where is the boat?"

"Oh, the boys will be along with it soon."

"And the prisoner?"

"Has his cord, file and pistol; it was slipped in to him, as I promised you it should be, by one of the prison guards, and he is now filing his way out to freedom."

"God grant he succeed."

"Now tell me, Kate, your motive for serving this young man; you surely do not love him?" asked the man, with a suspicion of jealousy.

"No, and yet I have a high regard for him; but to tell you the truth, Alston, I serve him to confer a favor upon another."

"And that other, Kate?"

The woman walked quickly to and fro, and then turning to her companion laid her hand upon his shoulder, while she said, in a low tone:

"Alston Brooks, when I was a girl of twelve, and you a boy of fifteen, you told me you loved me, and asked me when we grew up to man's and woman's estate to be your wife—I kept my promise to you I would not now be the guilty thing I am; but I was dazzled by the fascinations of Ringold, and I forsook my old father in his sorrow and poverty, and went to the bad, and my act drove you to dissipation, ay, more, for I know all, Alston, and I blame myself for your evil career."

"Now, my old father comes to me and asks me to do him a favor, for he thought that I could, through my evil associations, do what he wished."

"He told me he would take me back to his heart, if I would free from prison, where he had been unjustly sentenced for life, a brave, noble boy, one who saved my life once, and I promised him I would do all in my power, and I asked Ringold to aid me; but he was jealous, and though knowing he could, with his power as a gambler, get the boy out of prison, he refused; so I thought of you, and I came to you, Alston."

"Yes, and I have kept my promise as far as I could; if he escapes, I will do more for him for your sake, Kate; but don't speak of Flash Ringold to me, for I hate him."

"And I do too, Alston, and I will keep my promise made you, for you have a noble heart to take me as I am, and make me your wife."

"But I swear it, Kate, and from this night I will cast all evil associations behind me, and, if your father will take you back to his heart and home, I will ship on board some privateer and win a name for myself."

"Good, true Alston; but is not that the boat

creeping along yonder under the shadow of the land?"

"Yes; you have good eyes, Kate."

"Oh that success may come to us, for I would give my life, Alston, to do some act to win the gratitude of my poor old father, whose life I have wrecked," and the woman trembled with emotion, while the man said softly:

"Cheer up, Kate, for, as you see the moon yonder rising above that pile of misery, leaving beneath it the sin and wretchedness within those stone walls, and sailing up into the bright blue skies, so will our lives in the future rise, Phoenix like, out of the ashes of bitter deeds and accursed memories, and glide into the paths of honor and rectitude."

The woman silently pressed the hand of her companion, and the two walked to the bank, where a light skiff, with two men in it, arrived as they did.

"All right, boys, we have done all we can, and he must do his part—see! is not that his form in the window now—there, where the moonlight falls on that angle?"

"Yes; it is unfortunate that his cell is where the moonlight strikes it, for the guard will be almost certain to see him," answered one of the men in the boat.

"God grant he be not seen; how long was the rope you sent him, Alston?" asked Kate.

"A hundred feet, and his cell is fifty from the ground, so he will have a chance to tie knots in it every foot, for it is a small line to hold one's weight upon, but I could not risk a larger bundle—see, he has swung himself out of his cell window, and is coming slowly down; now may good angels protect the brave boy," and as Alston Brooks spoke the eyes of all four were fixed upon the swinging form, hanging between heaven and earth, and making a desperate, daring stroke for freedom from life-long imprisonment.

CHAPTER X.

A SHOT FOR FREEDOM.

THE object observed by the keen eyes of the party on the opposite shore, was indeed a human form; a prisoner making a bold effort to escape.

As he stood on the sill, and arranged the slender cord upon which his hopes were centered, his face was turned toward the moonlight, and revealed Carl Manners, though he was very pale, haggard, and a stern, hard look had settled upon his mouth.

"It is nine chances to one that the cord breaks and I fall, and as many more that the sentinel puts a bullet through me; but it is worth the risk, for death is preferable to staying here, and I would risk ten thousand deaths to gain my freedom and avenge the death of my poor mother, for he killed her, by putting me here."

"Oh, curse you, Hugh Trevor, I will yet hunt you down."

He glanced down the dizzy height, yet without a quiver, for he was a sailor and had a cool head, and then he looked long and earnestly out over the river, and muttered:

"I wonder who my friends are, that are thus aiding me? The guard that brought me the file and cord, did not know, or would not tell, but said they would await me yonder at that old inn, I have seen in the daytime, and they sent me word to make every effort, for I had my mother's murderer to track down: well, I might as well start," and re-entering his cell, through the opening he had made, by filing out the iron-bars, he soon returned with a small bundle hanging at his back, and fearlessly swung himself off into mid-air.

The rope, or rather cord, was very small, but he had knotted it all the way down, and this enabled him to get a tolerably firm grasp, and slowly he descended, hand under hand, until he was within twenty feet of the ground.

There, upon the sill of the lower tier of cells, he paused to rest his cramped hands, and as he did so, he felt himself firmly grasped by two strong arms thrust out of the grating.

He knew that it was a fellow prisoner, envious of his good luck, and determined to prevent his escape.

"Hold on, chum, you cannot go unless you take me with you," said a savage voice.

"That is impossible, for I left my files in my cell."

"Climb back and get them."

"That I cannot do, for my hands are tired out now with this small cord; unhand me, please!"

"No, I've been waiting for you, for I saw the cord come down, being awake, for I have murder on my conscience, and can't sleep much;

but I'll stop your little game right here, if you don't take me with you."

"I tell you I cannot; if it were possible, gladly would I free you from these walls; but were my own freedom to depend on it, I could not climb ten feet on this cord."

"I'll give the alarm, and hold you until the guards come," said the man threateningly.

"And if you do, I will kill you," came the determined reply.

"No, you've got nothing to kill with; will you help me out?"

"No, for I cannot."

"Then here goes—help! help! help!"

Loud and startling the convict's voice rung out into the night air, just as the voice of the sentinel had rung out in drawing tones:

"Ten o'clock, and all's well!"

Hurrying feet were heard, loud voices rung through the corridor, and Carl Manners knew that he had but one chance for freedom, for the man's arms were locked around his legs with a strength he could not shake off.

"Unhand me, or I will kill you! I swear it!" he said in suppressed tones.

The convict gave a derisive laugh, and instantly, swinging by one hand, Carl drew from his waist-pocket a pistol with the other and shoved it into the man's face.

"Will you release me now?"

"No! I will die first!"

"Then die!"

There followed a flash and ringing report, a shriek and a heavy fall, and the fugitive prisoner swung himself downward with a rapidity that blistered his cramped hands.

But unmindful of the pain he dashed across the garden, in which he had landed, bounded a fence, and struck across a low meadow for the river.

"Halt!" cried the ringing voice of a guard, followed by the report of a musket and a bullet whistled by Carl's ear.

"A convict is escaping! To the boats!" called out another sentinel, and then the line of guards opened fire upon the flying youth, who was now plainly visible in the moonlight, running like a frightened deer for his life, for freedom lay before him and death behind.

CHAPTER XI.

ALSTON BROOKS'S CLEVER RUSE.

WITH beating hearts Alston Brooks and his companions watched the descending form of the prisoner, saw him pause upon the ledge of the window, and, as he remained longer than for a temporary rest, Kate said:

"Oh, why does he pause now?"

"The rope cuts his hands, doubtless; but he does stop too long—what can it mean?"

"Oh! what can it mean?" cried the woman, as the youth still clung to the window sill.

"It means that's trouble that," said one of the men in the boat.

"You are right, Tom; there is trouble; he has been discovered; see how he struggles—Oh! Heaven aid him—Ha!"

The flash of the pistol brought a startled cry to the lips of the four, and then, almost a cheer followed, as, after the report, they saw the prisoner rapidly descend.

"The prison is aroused; now, my brave boy, you have to run the gantlet of death!" cried Alston Brooks.

"And he is doing it nobly; see, he cleared that fence at a bound—there! he is down—no, no; he merely stumbled, and see how he flies—oh, my brave noble boy, come on! come on! for the love of God, come on!" and Kate clasped her hands and gazed with straining eyes at the fugitive, as he bounded toward the river, unhurt by the rattling fire poured upon him.

"Oh, those horrid guns! they will yet kill him, Alston!" and dropping upon her knees, with hands raised supplicatingly to Heaven, she cried in pleading tones:

"Oh, Heavenly Father! save him, save him, for he has committed no crime!"

"Ha! he has gained the river, and yonder come the boat crews out of the prison; now is our time to act, Kate."

"And what would you do, Alston?"

"I cannot. . . . I will save him, while you mount my horse and ride him back to town; I will return by the boat, and we will meet to-morrow."

The man gave a low whistle, and the well-trained animal trotted up to the river bank, and Alston Brooks raised Kate lightly to the saddle.

"You know where he is to go, Alston?"

"Yes, I will run him there myself in Bolton's yacht. Now, be off."

"And you will save him, Alston?"

"Ay, if I have to fight the guards, for I work for you, Kate, and for our future—now, be off!"

She kissed her hand to him, and dashed off in the direction of the lane, while Alston Brooks sprung into the skiff, and said sternly:

"Give way, men!"

Out from the shadows of the tree-lined bank darted the skiff, and a moment after was speeding toward the brave swimmer, who, with tremendous strokes was making for the other shore, while the crews of the prison boats were springing in and seizing their oars.

"Hold sir! you are my prisoner!" cried Alston Brooks as he drew near.

But Carl was not to be taken easily, and dove out of sight.

When he reappeared, Alston said quickly:

"I am your friend, not your foe; swim here!"

As Carl saw that the boat was almost upon him, he said gloomily, for he knew that escape was impossible, and did not believe that Alston was his friend:

"Kill me, but do not send me back to yonder prison."

"I am your friend, I say, and disguised as a detective," and he called out aloud.

"Drag him in boys!"

"Now I will hail the guard-boats, and he cried:

"Ho the prison boats!"

"Ay, ay."

"I have one of them safe; the others have reached the shore, so row there after them."

"Were there more than one?" asked a voice from the boat.

"Oh yes: two reached the river before the alarm: See, they are landing yonder; if you pull fast you can catch them."

"And who are you, sir?"

"I am Gil Wright, the detective," answered Alston with unblushing effrontery, and the officer in the leading boat, said pleasantly:

"Ah, captain, I recognize you now."

"Yes, I should have told you who I was before: I am on a little secret expedition up here; but I have your man safe, and will deliver him up, for I go to the prison."

"I guess I'd better take him, captain, for—"

"Help! help! help!"

The cry rung out from the old inn, and in a female voice, and changing his mind the officer pulled rapidly away, followed by the other boat, and headed for the shore at the spot the skiff had left.

"I told you they had landed, and already they are in mischief," called out Alston Brooks in a loud tone, and then he added:

"That was a narrow escape, young man; but I would have fought before I gave you up."

"Yet Kate, noble girl, cried out just in time, and it was clever in her to think of waiting to see if you escaped."

"She prevented trouble certain," said one of the oarsmen.

"Yes, she sung out just in the nick o' time," answered the other.

"Kate is a noble girl, and you owe her your life, young man," and Alston gazed upon the fearless and handsome face of Carl, who answered:

"And I owe you my life: but who you, and the one you call Kate, is I do not know."

"Boys, the guards have landed; now pull with a will down the river: that's the way, make her fly: now, young man, I'll ask you if you know Benjamin Burdick?"

"One whom we call on Staten Island old Ben Buntline?" asked Carl.

"Yes, that is the man."

"Yes, I know him, and he has a noble heart."

"Well, Kate is his daughter."

"What! Kate Burdick has been my friend this night?" asked Carl in unfeigned surprise.

"Yes; you saved her life once, and her old father came and begged her to help you out, and she did it, as you see, with the aid I gave her."

"Poor Kate."

"It was poor Kate; but she's changed now, and I guess, young man, she'll win your respect and not your pity in the future; but we'll not discuss her now, but yourself, for I have orders to take you to the home of Captain Abram Ferris."

"At Perth Amboy?"

"Yes: we'll get a yacht, belonging to a friend of mine, when we strike the city, and we can run you down before daylight, for the wind is fair: now let me congratulate you, for you are safe now, and in this bundle you'll find a new rig, for that suit you have on isn't becoming."

Carl grasped the outstretched hand, but uttered no word, as he dare not trust himself to speak, and in a few moments he had discarded

his prison suit, and robed himself in the clothing which Kate Burdick had provided for him.

In half an hour more, the skiff ran alongside of a trim little sloop yacht, which was soon after standing down the harbor, and her destination was the home of the Fair Maid of Perth.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HAUNTED MANSION.

THOUGH the night had begun in calm beauty, it was not long after Alston Brooks had reached the little sloop yacht, with the youth he had so daringly released from prison walls, before dark clouds swept over the heavens, and the light of the moon was shut out by the rising storm.

With the increased wind the little craft bounded along in her flight, Alston Brooks having given the helm to Carl Manners, who knew every foot of the harbor of New York and the surrounding waters.

"We are going to have a severe storm, sir, and we could not beat down to Amboy against it before day; in fact, if it comes on to blow as it threatens we dare not run," said Carl, glancing anxiously around him at the gathering gloom.

"What is to be done then, for I promised to carry you down to the home of Captain Ferris?" answered Brooks.

"I will tell you; do you see yonder point of wooded land on Staten Island?"

"Yes, we have to stand in pretty close to it."

"Well, up in those woods, and back a few hundred yards from the shore, stands an old mansion that has not been inhabited for years, not in my recollection, and the people on the island give it a wide berth, saying it is haunted."

"Ah, yes, I have heard of it; and in fact seen it, in passing by; they call it the Haunted Mansion."

"That's the place; well, if you are willing, I can land there, for no one will ever come there to look for me, and you can return to New York and reach the Battery before the storm breaks."

"You are a plucky youngster, to go to that place; I wouldn't do it for a fortune—that is, alone, for I don't like the dead," said Alston Brooks, with a shudder.

"It is the living, not the dead, I fear; but I will be safe there, and to-morrow night I will go on to Amboy, for I must not stay about New York just now."

"That you must not, for the escape you made to-night will arouse the city, especially if you killed that convict."

"I killed him; it was his life, or my going back into the prison for life; I warned him that I would kill him, and I had to do it. Now I will land there," and Carl ran the yacht close in under the land.

"I hate to see you go to that house, yet it's the best you can do, I guess; but here are a couple of pistols and a knife for you, and this little purse may come in handy."

"I can never repay you, I fear, sir, for all you have done for me; but thank Kate for me, and tell her I hope the future will bring her the happiness her noble heart deserves."

"It shall, if man's devotion will bring her joy. Now here is a little bag of provisions that may come useful. Good-by, and may luck attend you."

Carl ran the yacht close inshore, seized the hand of Alston Brooks, and with a word each to the other men, took up his belt of arms and provisions and sprang on shore.

With a pleasant good-by the men shoved the yacht off, and away she darted before the rapidly rising wind, while Carl Manners stood on the bank gazing after it and seemingly more anxious about those who had proven his friends than regarding his own safety.

"They'll reach New York before the storm catches them," he said, after watching the craft until the gloom hid it from sight, and then he turned and slowly ascended the hill by a road that had long been weed-grown and untrod.

A thick undergrowth of trees was springing up among the forest trees, that had once been a park, and the darkness, when in the timber, was intense; but Carl seemed to know the way, and after a few minutes' walk, came out in front of an old brick mansion, where once had dwelt an English lord, 'twas said; but who had, a score of years before, been found dead one morning in his bed, along with two servants who slept in the house with him.

Who were the murderers none ever knew, and no heir claiming the place, it had gradually gone to ruin, until the gossamer wind it was

haunted, and strange stories were told of ghostly forms seen there at night, by those who had never gone near the old place after dark.

But nothing daunted by their weird tales, and seemingly unmindful of the howling winds and rattling thunder, Carl Manners boldly approached the rambling old structure, and ascended the creaking stairs leading to the piazza.

There he paused, while the wind dashed the shutters to and fro with angry bang, and whistled dismally through broken window panes and crevices.

"Well, this is a dismal place to live, I'll admit; yet it is cheerful in comparison to that accursed old prison, and I am content; now to find a neck to rest in," and he tried the door knob, but found it fast.

Then he turned to a window, shoved up the sash and stepped within, but to suddenly spring back on the piazza more quickly than he had entered.

The cause of Carl's sudden retreat was at seeing the flash of a light coming from the hall beyond, and hearing a heavy step upon the floor.

"No, there is no one here; and yet that was not the flash of lightning; I must be cautious," he whispered, and crouching down close to the wall he waited a moment, and then through the glass upon either side of the front door, he saw streams of light pour forth out upon the piazza, and dancing about as though held in an unsteady hand.

A moment after the light disappeared, a quick step resounded in the room, through the crash of which Carl had entered and made his rapid exit; and then a human head and shoulders looked out into the gloom.

Crouching close against the wall, and with pistol in hand, Carl waited, while the one who looked out upon the darkness, said quickly, in a deep, angry voice:

"In the devil's name, who opened this window; can any of the men have arrived? No, or I should have heard them."

With eager glance he peered into the gloom, and then lowered the sash and turned away.

Carl drew a long breath, and as he heard the woman walk across the floor, he sprang to the window and gazed into the window-lights upon either side, when he saw a large burly individual, with heavy beard and sailor suit, while in a belt around his waist were two pistols and a long knife.

Picking up the lamp from the steps, the man ascended the stairway to the floor above, each step causing a creaking sound that might be likened to the shrieking of demons.

"The house is haunted; but not by ghosts; I must be cautious," muttered Carl, and he descended from the piazza and sought a hiding-place beneath in the basement area, where he intended to decide upon some plan to discover the cause of the man's presence in the old mansion, and who it was that he was expecting.

Hardly had he taken up his position in the shadow of the piazza, when he was startled by hearing voices approaching, and the next moment three men appeared and ascended the steps.

"Give the signal, Pete," said one in a commanding tone, and a long shrill whistle followed.

"He'll not hear it for the howling wind," said the one who had before spoken; "kick on the door!"

"He'll take that for the banging of the shutters, captain; ugh, what a dismal place to live in."

"Then break in that window and we'll enter!" said the leader impatiently.

"And get a shot for our pains?"

"You are right; Devil Dick would fire upon us—halloo! halloo!"

The clear voice rung out above the howling of the winds, and soon after the sound of a step on the stairs was heard, and a voice from within asked:

"Well, what's wanted?"

"Open, Dick, for it is I," answered the leader.

"Ah, captain, it is you; come to the window and enter, and we'll go up-stairs," and the man raised the sash, while the three visitors sprang into the room.

"You've not been here before to-night, captain?"

"No, we just landed."

"That sash was raised awhile since, and I cannot account for it."

"Ah, there's been no one around, I'll wager, after they dread this place as they do the devil; in fact, Devil Dick, you are the only man I know who would stay here alone."

"It is a better place than a prison, captain."

was the significant answer, and the party ascended to the upper floor.

All that had been said, Carl Manners had distinctly heard, and confident that some deep plot of mischief was on hand, he determined to discover what it was, and once more cautiously ascended to the piazza and entered the room through the window, and leaving it up, in case he should have to beat a hasty retreat.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PLOT OVERHEARD.

UPON account of the creaking boards and steps, it was a most daring undertaking in Carl Manners to attempt to ascend to the upper story, but he was of an utterly fearless nature, and hearing the voices of the men above, he slowly, and with extreme caution felt his way along, crossed the hallway and reached the stairs.

His first step here caused an unearthly creaking sound, and the voices ceased, and a heavy step came to the landing above, but after listening awhile, the man returned, and his words were distinctly heard by Carl.

"This old shanty has more strange noises in it on stormy nights than any place I ever struck, but I never heard those stairs cry out unless someone trod on them."

"Nonsense, Devil Dick, it is the wind; just listen how the storm howls, and here comes the rain," answered the one whom Carl had heard addressed as captain.

Convinced that he must be more cautious, Carl got upon the stair-railing, and began to pull himself slowly up by sheer strength, and after a severe struggle reached the landing.

A bright stream of light came out of a door at one side of the hall, and through this the courageous youth peeped, to start with surprise, for seated at a table were the four men, and one of them was Ned Darrell, the one who had escaped from the Maid of Perth the night of her capture by the cutter, while Devil Dick as he had been called, Carl recognized as a famous river pirate, who had been sentenced to death, but had escaped.

The cause of their meeting there in that old haunted mansion, their conversation soon told to the listener.

"Well, captain, what luck?" asked Devil Dick, addressing Ned Darrell.

"All is well, only I've changed my mind about the schooner."

"You can't get a better craft than the Maid of Perth."

"Not a faster one, I admit, but one that can sail like a witch and is equipped from keel to truck; I mean the cutter."

"The devil! You don't mean to say you are going to cut out Lieut. Royal Dean's cruiser the Sea Wizard?"

"That is just what I do mean, Devil Dick, and I'll tell you why: you know Dean ran out a month ago and captured a British brigantine after a savage fight, and he won his captaincy for it, and, as the cutter was badly wounded, Government had her put in perfect order for him, and she was drawn out into the stream to-day, and he went on board with a dozen men, to await his crew, which is to be made up from the other vessels of the fleet; but it will be a week before all are on board, and we must strike to-morrow night, and at once put to sea through the sound, for I know the cutter's signals for passing the forts."

"A good plan, captain; but can you get your men together?"

"Yes, for Rodney here will go to work at daylight collecting men along the docks, and White says he can get those already shipped in a few hours."

"I can easily," answered the man addressed as White, "for the lads will be more anxious to go on an armed craft than on one we had to arm, as we would have had to do with the Maid."

"Yes, and I believe Hugh Trevor has some arrangement with Government to let him take Ferris's schooner; so now, Devil Dick, can you get your Staten Island crew ready?"

"Oh yes, captain, and I am to be first lieutenant, am I?"

"Yes, and Rodney and White my other two officers, and if we do not make a fortune it will be our own fault."

"Have you got your flag yet?"

"Yes, and it is suggestive, for it is black, with a red gallows and white skeleton form suspended; do you fear to serve under it?"

"I fear nothing except a prison cell, Captain Darrell."

"So I should think, when you dwell in this place all alone; great God! it sounds as though devils incarnate were having a revel below

stairs; but you understand, we will meet at midnight with our respective crews, at the cove a quarter of a mile from here, and run down to the cutter, which Dean has anchored off the Keel and Anchor Inn, for he's dead in love with Clarette Manners, the sister of that accursed convict who betrayed old Ferris and myself."

"Well, you are even with him, for he's in for life at Blackwell; how many men do you take?"

"Eighty, and more if I can get them; but if there is not a stiff breeze blowing, I won't attempt it to-morrow night; now we must be off—"

Carl Manners waited to hear no more, but slid down the bannister rapidly, crossed the hall and room and sprang out upon the piazza, closing the sash down behind him.

It was raining hard, and the storm roared through the forest, but unheeding the fury of the elements he set off at a rapid pace through the woods, going in the direction of a highway, which he knew led to the inn of the Keel and Anchor.

CHAPTER XIV.

A MIDNIGHT VISITOR.

RESTLESSLY trigging at her cables, and with the wind whistling furiously through her rigging the Sea Wizard lay at anchor, the eighth of a mile off the shore, and nearly opposite the Keel and Anchor Inn.

Her commander, Captain Royal Dean, had retired to his comfortable cabin, and with his Lieutenant Mart Murdock and a couple of midshipmen, was indulging in a game of whist, for the night had been too inclement for him to venture ashore on a visit to the inn, where dwelt the fair Clarette Manners, since the death of her mother, for the old colonel and his daughter Agnes had felt the deepest compassion for the orphan girl since the grief that had fallen upon her in the death of Mrs. Manners, and the incarceration of Carl.

The few seamen on board the cutter had gone below and turned in, excepting the watch, and they were hugging the high bulwarks to escape the pelting storm, and the forecabin watch was half asleep, when he was awakened by a tap on the shoulder.

Starting suddenly, he discovered a dripping form by his side, and a deep voice asked:

"Is Captain Dean on board?"

"First tell me how you got on board?" asked the surprised watch, his hand upon his cutlass.

"Over the bows, and by aid of the forechains; if you do not keep better watch, it will not be well for you; but I would see your captain."

"He don't want to see you."

"That we will soon see, and if you do not keep a more civil tongue, I will tell him I surprised you asleep."

"No, lad, don't do that; I bailed you just as you came near; of course you can see the captain, for your business must be important, or you wouldn't have swam out to the cutter, for I see no boat; come this way, and don't tell the captain."

He led the way aft and reported to the midshipman, who had charge of the deck:

"This man wants to see the captain, sir."

"Hal! when and how did you come on board, sir?" asked the midshipman, in a pompous tone.

"I swam out, sir, and boarded over the bows two minutes ago; can I see Captain Dean?"

"I guess so," and opening the cabin companionway, while he still kept his eyes fixed upon the stranger, whose hat was drawn down and collar turned up to hide his face, he said:

"Captain Dean, there is a man here to see you, sir."

"Send him in, Caruthers," came the answer, and the visitor stepped down into the cabin, but seeing others present, held his head down and said:

"My business is private, sir, and to you alone can I communicate it."

"Ah! gentlemen, I will have to ask to be alone, please, and the officers arose and passed from the cabin into the ward-room.

"Now, sir," and Royal Dean turned his piercing eyes upon the man before him.

"Do you recognize me, Captain Dean?" and the head was raised, the dripping hat removed, and collar thrown back.

"Great heavens! you are Carl Manners!" exclaimed Royal Dean, in surprise.

"I am, sir."

"I thought you were in prison."

"I was until four hours ago, Captain Dean, but I escaped, and—"

"Escaped? and came here to me, Manners, though you knew my duty as an officer must

compel me to turn you over to the prison authorities again? Oh, Carl, why did you force this sad duty upon me?"

"Captain Dean, I acted in this case, as I did once before; to serve my country, and sink myself in the act."

"Then I suffered oh, how deeply, but to-night I escaped from behind those wretched prison walls, and yet, in making my escape, was forced to take the life of a fellow convict."

"Oh, Carl! Carl!"

"I am telling you the truth, sir; he tried to hold my freedom from me because I could not aid him, and, though I warned him, he disregarded my warning, and I shot him; but it is not of myself that I would speak, but of you, and that which concerns you; but first tell me of my sister Clarette."

"She is well, or was this morning; you knew that your poor mother died of a broken heart?"

"Yes, I know all; but thank God Clarette is well; and she is at the Keel and Anchor?"

"Yes; your old home is closed up."

"Ah! how I longed to see Clarette, as I came by the inn; but I dared not, but hastened on here."

"And how did you reach the cutter?"

"I swam out, for I could find no boat on the shore."

"And why did you come here, Carl, for you have put upon me the most painful duty of my life."

"I came, sir, to tell you of a plot to seize your vessel."

"What! a plot to seize this craft?" asked Royal Dean in surprise.

"Yes, sir; where I discovered it, I will not tell; but, after escaping from prison I sought refuge in a house where I heard four men plot to take your craft to-morrow night."

"As I heard it, they had intended seizing the Maid of Perth, but the leader changed his mind, when he learned that the cutter had just been repaired and fully equipped, and had only a dozen men on board of her."

"That is true; myself, Lieutenant Murdock, three midshipmen and ten men are all on board; but during the next few days we are to get our full complement; but continue with your story."

"Well, sir, the leader is Ned Darrell, who you remember escaped the night we chased the Maid of Perth."

"Yes, I remember him, and I remember too that your service that night should have cleared you at your trial; but Trevor's money bought the Jury, though I did all that I could to save you."

"I know that well, Captain Dean; but I was sacrificed to the gold of the Trevors; but I have come again to serve you, for at midnight, if there is a good breeze to-morrow night, eighty men are to board the cutter, seize her, and run out to sea by the way of Hell Gate and the Sound, and when you know that Devil Dick the escaped convict, is second in command to Ned Darrell, you may feel how desperate will be the attempt."

"Fools! the forts will not let them pass without the signals."

"Darrell claims to know the signals, and with their numbers, and your small crew, they could easily take the cutter without attracting attention."

"They could indeed, I frankly admit; but forewarned is forearmed, and through you I will be able to meet them, for I will man the cutter to-morrow."

"May I suggest, sir, that you give them the surprise they intend for you; by sending to the fort to-night, you could get a hundred men on board the cutter by dawn, for to-morrow you will doubtless be watched; but taken by surprise you could capture the whole band, and when I tell you that the intention of Ned Darrell is to raise the pirate flag, you may know that it is best to have such men where they can do no harm."

"You are right, Carl; I will send Murdock at once to the fort, and—but do not let him, or any one else see you, for I will not be the man to give you up; there, go into my state-room."

He threw open the door and Carl entered, while Lieutenant Murdock came into the cabin, in answer to a call from his captain.

"Mart, I have received important news of an intended seizure of the cutter to-morrow night, and as I wish to get a crew on board to meet them, and not have it known they are here, I wish you to go to the fort, represent to the commandant the situation, and ask to have seventy-five or eighty men return with you. Take the two cutters and the gig, with men enough to row them, and let not a word escape you as to the cause."

"Ay, ay, sir," and ten minutes after three boats pulled silently away from the cutter, and headed toward the fort.

CHAPTER XV.

ON THE FUGITIVE'S TRACK.

"AGNES, I wish I was a man," and Clarette Manners looked longingly out from her comfortable room upon the harbor, the Long Island shore beyond, and the rakish-looking American cruiser lying at anchor a few cables' length from the Keel and Anchor Inn.

"Why, Clarette?" asked Agnes Benedict, who sat also by the window, engaged in sewing.

"Because I would free Carl from that hateful prison if it cost me my life," said the beautiful girl, determinedly.

"Ah, Cla, that were an impossible thing to do; but still women have done as daring deeds as men, and—"

"And what, Agnes?"

"And I believe if we set our heads to work we could get Carl free."

"Oh, Agnes!"

"It is true, I do believe we could, and I would give my right hand to release him, for I saw him strike Talbot Trevor down, and the blow was given in self-defense, and not meant to kill, and the money of the Trevors only sent him to prison, so I would like to get him out, even if I had no interest in him, only to make Hugh Trevor tremble, for he fears Carl."

"Carl has a noble nature, Agnes; but if he were free he would hunt down Hugh Trevor; but see, there is a police boat landing."

The boat to which Clarette referred touched the shore and three men in the uniform of city guardians of the peace, sprung ashore and approached the inn.

"Well, gentlemen, walk upon the piazza and have a mug of my own brewing, for it isn't often I see you on the island," said Colonel Benedict, in his hospitable way, and his words were distinctly heard by the two maidens at the window, as was also the reply of the officer in charge of the party, who said:

"Thank you, colonel; we will wash the salt air out of our throats; but have you seen anything of an escaped convict; whom you know well, and who is none other than Carl Manners, who lived near here about?"

"Carl Manners escaped?"

The words came from the lips of Colonel Benedict, but they were echoed by the two maidens, while in the tone of all three there was secret exultation.

"Yes, he made a daring escape from Blackwell's Island last night, for you know he was put there in the new prison, and he killed a fellow convict in getting out, and ran the gauntlet of half a hundred shots and reached the river, where a man, disguised as Gil Wright the detective, cleverly played it on the guards and carried him off."

"Gentlemen, I am really glad the boy got away, for his trial was a farce, and his conviction, a cruel crime."

"He wasn't dealt fairly with, all admit, colonel; but he was sentenced, and has escaped, besides killing a convict in making that escape, and our duty is to hunt him down; haven't seen anything of him in these parts, I judge?"

"No indeed; he'd be a fool to come here; but I hope you won't find him, for I like the boy; but here is your ale, and here comes another friend of the boy's."

The new-comer was old Ben Burdick, or Buntline as he was called on the island, and in breathless suspense the two girls listened to hear more, a fervent prayer upon their lips that Carl would not be taken.

"Ah, old man; haven't seen Carl Manners around here?" asked the officer, enjoying the cool piazza of the inn, and a glass of foaming ale, more than looking for a fugitive from justice.

"I see no joke in poking fun at an unfortunate boy who is under life-sentence," was the surly reply of Ben Buntline, as he took a seat and ordered a glass of the cool beverage.

"He's emigrated from prison, old man."

"Gone! escaped! Carl Manners free!" cried the old fisherman, springing to his feet, and dashing down the mug of ale, smashing it to atoms.

"He's out, I tell you."

"Thank God for that news; well, I suppose you are looking for him; trying like honest officers of the law you try to believe yourselves, to catch him, and then earn a little blood-money."

"We are doing our duty, sir," answered the chief, with anger.

"God help the duty, when it is to drag a poor boy back to prison, and I say, thank God, he has escaped; but fill up the glasses, colonel, and we'll drink to the boy's freedom," and Ben Buntline laughed heartily, while he cast triumphant glances at the officers, who were rising to depart, when one of them remarked:

"We won't have to go out to the cutter, for there comes a boat ashore."

Agnes Benedict and Clarette Manners saw the boat also, and the former remarked:

"There is Captain Dean in the stern sheets, Cla, and an officer I do not recognize; but just to think that what we were speaking of has come to pass."

"Yes, Carl has escaped; but, oh, how terrible to think he had to take human life again—my poor, poor brother, how cruel is fate to him; but where can he have gone, Agnes, and who can have been his friends?"

"I do not imagine who; but while we were thinking they were working; but see, the captain and his companion are coming up to the inn."

The two officers, one of them Royal Dean, the other a tall, well-formed man in lieutenant's uniform, and with a heavy beard hiding his face, approached the inn, when the police arose and saluted, the leader saying:

"Captain Dean, I was ordered to report to you, sir, that the convict, Carl Manners, who murdered Mr. Talbot Trevor—"

"Hold, sir! Mr. Manners did not murder Mr. Talbot Trevor; he struck a blow in self-defense, and Mr. Trevor's soft head could not stand it; but poor Manners had to suffer for it though," and Royal Dean spoke sternly, which caused the officer to say:

"He seems to have many friends in these parts, sir; but I have to report that he escaped last night, and in doing so, killed a comrade in prison who tried to check his flight."

"Well, sir?"

"They want you to be good enough to keep a sharp look-out for him, sir."

"Tell your chief that I am not under his orders, nor do I intend to do his work; but you are merely discharging your duties, so colonel give them a glass at my expense," and Royal Dean entered the tap-room, accompanied by his brother officer.

"Bessie," he said to the pretty bar-maid: "kindly ask Miss Manners if I can come up to the second parlor and bring a friend!"

"Yes, Captain Dean, come right up, for I saw you coming and ran down to meet you," said Agnes Benedict, opening the hall door.

"My friend Lieutenant Carleton, Miss Benedict," said Royal Dean and the maiden greeted the officer pleasantly, and led the way to the sitting-room that overlooked the bay.

The next moment they entered the pleasant room, and Clarette, with a blush, arose to greet them, and in her dress of deep mourning, she looked as beautiful as an angel, in the eyes of Royal Dean.

"I saw you with my glass and concluded I'd pull ashore on a visit, young ladies, especially as I was anxious that you should meet my friend, Lieutenant Carleton," said the captain, and his eyes were fastened upon Clarette, who glanced upon the stranger, gave a slight, startled cry, and springing to the door closed and locked it, when she rushed up to the supposed lieutenant and threw herself in his arms, sobbing forth:

"Carl! Carl! my poor, poor brother."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PLOT RIPENS.

"Ah Carl! have you dared come here when the officers of the law are now looking for you?" asked Agnes Benedict, when the greeting between the brother and sister was over, for, in spite of his disguise Clarette had recognized him.

"It is my fault that he is here, Miss Agnes, and, as far as I can, I will explain why, for he boarded my vessel last night to make known a desperate attempt, he had accidentally learned of, to turn the Sea Wizard into a pirate, and of course I will not betray him; but I wished him to see Miss Clarette and yourself before he leaves, for I have advised Carl to go to Baltimore and ship on some privateer, and consequently I disguised him in my old lieutenant's uniform, and a false beard I got to wear at a mask ball some time ago; you have keen eyes, Miss Clarette, to recognize your brother, as he now appears."

"God grant no one else may do it; but, Carl, how was it that you had to stain your hands to escape—must Death ever follow where you go?" asked Clarette, deeply moved.

"I will tell you all, and I do not think you can really blame me; for oh! what did I not suffer in those gloomy walls," and Carl told the whole story of his escape.

"But who were your noble friends, Carl?"

"That, I cannot tell, sister Cla, for it would not be just to them."

"To think that others aided you, while I remained inactive here; but you must not stay around here now, or you will assuredly be taken, and I will aid you to do as Captain Dean says; that is, go to Baltimore."

"No, Cla, you must do nothing, for you will be closely watched, as it will be expected that I will try to see you."

"I have a place to go, and to-morrow night I will leave the island and start on my way, and, if I cannot win a name during the war, that will take the stain now resting on me off, I am very much mistaken, for, though the world may believe me guilty, at heart I am innocent of all crime."

"You are indeed, Carl, and when you are gone, I will see that your name does not suffer," said Royal Dean, and calling to Agnes, he left the room, leaving the brother and sister together.

For half an hour Carl was with Clarette, a half hour that seemed but a minute to them, for they talked of their dead mother, the past, and their hopes for the future; then Captain Dean and Agnes entered the room, farewells were spoken, and the cutter's commander and his supposed lieutenant departed from the inn, leaving the city officers still discussing the best way to go about the capture of the daring young convict who had so cleverly escaped from prison.

Entering their boat, Royal Dean and Carl returned on board the cutter, when the latter again retired to the privacy of the state-room, and the former paced to and fro the quarter-deck, his eyes often turning upon the window in the inn, where sat Clarette Manners, whom the young officer was compelled to admit had stolen his heart wholly out of his own keeping.

At last the twilight shadows fell upon the waters, and shut out the shore from distinct view; but a light shone in the window of the inn, and ere long the moon arose and shed a bright light over the waters.

As the time wore on Captain Dean descended to his cabin, and said simply:

"Come! it is now ten o'clock, and a stiff breeze has sprung up with the moon; put on your disguise, and here are arms."

Carl Manners came out of the state-room, wearing the same disguise he had gone ashore in, and buckling on a belt with a couple of pistols and a sword attached, he said simply:

"I am ready, sir."

The two then ascended to the deck, and calling to Lieutenant Murdock, Royal Dean said:

"Mart, get the men on deck now."

"Ay, ay, sir, and the lieutenant gave a few low orders to the midshipmen, and out of the ward-room and steerage, one by one, came human forms.

Slowly, quietly they came on deck, all well armed, and lay down in rows under the shadow of the bulwarks, presenting a strange sight indeed, for an observer would at a casual glance have believed them to be dead.

And up into the heavens sailed the full moon, and the rising breeze caused the vessel to tug impatiently at her anchor, as though impatient to spread her white wings and fly away from the danger that threatened her.

And crouching back in the shadow of the quarter-deck was Royal Dean and his officers, talking in low tones; but none of them knowing who the strange lieutenant was, for they had not seen his face, and believed him to be what their captain represented, simply Lieutenant Carleton, who had come on board to warn them of the danger of an attack, which he had accidentally discovered.

Forward, one man was visible on duty, and purposely pacing the quarter-deck was a young midshipman; to a passing vessel or boat, these were the only signs of life upon the cruiser; and yet how formidable were those rows of silent men, all resting upon their arms and waiting the dread moment of combat, that must usher some into eternity, yet all willing to risk their lives, and die, if need be, in the good cause of their country.

"There is a boat visible, sir, coming aboard," said the midshipman in a low tone, turning his glass upon the object described, and which was coming slowly toward the cutter.

"Ay, ay, Fairfax; watch for others."

"Here they are, sir; four of them, and they come on with regular man-of-war stroke, and

without trying to disguise their intention," resumed the midshipman.

"They are up to some trick; keep your eye on them, Fairfax, and report," answered Royal Dean.

Proud of the duties devolving upon him, the midshipman continued to watch the approaching boat, the regular stroke of whose oars could now be distinctly heard by all on deck.

"They are coming two abreast, and heading for the stern, as though they were going to board on each quarter, sir."

"All right. Can you see if there are many men in them?"

"Yes, sir; they are crowded, and there's a uniform among them here and there, while the men look like regulars."

"Now hail, Fairfax," said Royal Dean, in a low tone, as the boats drew nearer.

Instantly the shrill voice of the young midshipman arose clear and distinct:

"Boats ahoy!"

"Ahoy! the Sea Wizard!" came back in a manly, ringing voice.

"What boats are those?" sung out the midshipman.

"We are from the flag-ship; the admiral has work at once for the cutter to do, and has sent a crew aboard with orders for Captain Dean," came in the same clear tones.

"Heavens! can that be true? Ask him who is in command," quickly called out Royal Dean.

"Who brings these orders to Captain Dean?" promptly asked the midshipman.

"I am Lieutenant Worden," was the reply.

"That is not Worden's voice; bid them come alongside, Fairfax," and in a low, distinct tone Royal Dean continued:

"Stand ready, all! Await my orders."

"Ay, ay, sir; come alongside!" called out Brete Fairfax, and the oars of the four boats fell simultaneously into the water, at the stern command of an officer:

"Give way, men!"

"Those crews are well trained; but we will soon know what they are," said Royal Dean, as the boats once more resumed their course toward the cutter; then he added, in a low tone, but which was heard by every man on deck:

"Ready, all! when I command, then fire!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ATTACK.

DEEPLY agitated by her unexpected interview with her brother, and most anxious regarding his fate, Clarette Manners sat in her room window long after his departure, her eyes fastened upon the cutter, where the well known form of Royal Dean was distinctly visible.

Declining to go down to supper, she still remained at her post until long after dark, when Agnes, having attended to the household duties devolving upon her, came and joined her at the window, saying kindly:

"Don't be blue, Cla, for it is a joy to know that Carl has escaped, and he will come out all right."

"He has not yet gotten out of harm's way, Agnes, but I trust he may: but look, how beautiful the night is, and who would think yonder little vessel could be so terrible in battle, as she has proven herself."

"The Sea Wizard has a gallant commander, Clarette, and one who I think is very deeply in love with a young friend of mine, even if she is not yet seventeen."

"Hush, Agnes; he would never love the sister of—"

"For shame, Clarette, for you were going to say that fearful word, *convict*; but Carl is not guilty, and cruel circumstances made him what he is, and placed that shame upon him: but be Carl Manners what he may, Captain Royal Dean is too noble a man to visit the sins of a brother upon a sister, and I tell you he worships the ground you walk on."

"It would make me happy to think so, Agnes, I frankly admit; but see, are not those boats moving along the shore?"

"Yes, there are four of them, and they are crossing the bay to the Long Island shore: where can they be coming from?"

"See, now that they have half crossed, they have turned and are standing toward the cutter, as though they had come down from the city: you don't think they can meditate evil, do you, Agnes?"

"I hope not; but there is a good watch on the cutter, Clarette."

"Yet only a dozen men, for the crew has not yet been sent on board—see! they have ceased

rowing, and I heard a hail from the Sea Wizard: and there is an answer."

For a moment the maidens listened in silence, and then Clarette said:

"They move on again: thank Heaven all is right: but I wonder if the cutter is ordered suddenly away."

"Oh God! what can that mean?"

The cry burst from the lips of Agnes Benedict, and it was no wonder that what she saw wrung from her the startled question, for suddenly, out upon the waters flashes of red fire enveloped the cutter, and then came the loud roar of firearms, the rattle of musketry, clash of steel meeting steel, and shouts and curses of combatants.

Dropping upon their knees before the window, with clasped hands and straining eyes they watched the fierce combat, while along the shore shouts of alarm were heard, lights flashed in the village houses, and men came rushing toward the inn.

"Oh father! what does it mean?" cried Agnes, as she beheld her father, half-dressed, appear upon the piazza.

"It must be a mutiny on board the cutter; come men, let us go out and aid that gallant boy Royal Dean," cried the old colonel, with enthusiasm.

"That's no mutiny, colonel, for there are two hundred men in that fight, and the cutter hadn't a score on board," cried a villager.

"It's the British, I guess, run in in their boats to cut the cruiser out," cried old Ben Buntline, who had just come up from his cabin under the hill.

"No matter what it is, we ought to go out to the aid of the captain; come, lads, arm yourselves, and follow me," called out Colonel Benedict, and rushing into the tap-room he soon returned with a musket and long cutlass.

"Hold on, colonel, for the fighting's over; see, the boats are driven off! Give the gallant cuttermen a cheer," called out Ben Buntline, and the half-dressed group about the inn gave a rousing hurrah, in which both Clarette and Agnes joined, for they saw, as had the others, that the attacking party had been beaten off.

"They are going to the Narrows; but they came the other way," said Agnes.

"They must be the British, and they doubtless came entirely around the island; but see, Agnes, there are but three boats, and there were four—Lark! There goes a heavy gun."

As Clarette spoke the bows of the Sea Wizard were lighted up, and the deep boom of a heavy gun startled the surrounding country.

And again and again, came the deep tones, until the third shot was followed by a terrific crash, and loud cries.

"They have struck one of the boats; see, it goes down, and the others do not stay to pick them up; oh! how intuman is man to his fellow-man," cried Clarette, while Agnes said:

"They are flying for their own lives; and how fast they row; there that point of land hides them from our view, but the cutter still fires upon them, and they cannot escape."

"Clarette, let us ask your father to go on board the cutter, for I wish to know if Carl, or Captain Dean are injured; do you not remember now, that Captain Dean said Carl had come on board to warn him of an attack, but I believed it had been averted."

"Yes, and so did I: but this then was it, and I do hope they are all safe, for there has been bloody work yonder to-night—oh father!" she called out.

"Well, child, what is it?"

"Are you going on board the Wizard?"

"Yes: I wanted to go before, but old Ben Buntline was the only one I could get to go with me, for these villagers are great talkers, but poor fighters," and with this sling at his patrons, who knowing they deserved it kept silent, the old man walked to the beach, accompanied by the old fishermen, and peremptorily declining the assistance of others, who, now that the danger was over, had a morbid curiosity to go on board and look at the dead and wounded.

As the skiff shoved off from the inn dock with the two old men, two boats darted away from the cutter's side in pursuit of the pirates who had been so handsomely driven off in their daring attack upon a cruiser almost under the very guns of the forts, and within a league of half a score vessels of war.

"See, Clarette, they are picking up the men from the sunken boat; and now they press on once more in pursuit; but we will soon know all, for father has nearly reached the cutter," and the two maidens still kept up their watching and waiting, yet dreading to hear sad tidings.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STRANGE MEETING.

THE attack upon the cutter, described as witnessed by those from the shore, proved, as the reader has seen, unsuccessful, though it was only after the most desperate resistance that Ned Darrell was driven back to his boats, and then only after the loss of the two officers, known as White and Rodney, and the wounding, though slightly of Devil Dick and himself. One third of his men he left dead, or wounded, upon the cutters' decks, and finding that he had been surprised instead of surprising as he had expected to, the Sea Wizard, he gave the order to retreat to the boats.

Though pressed hard, and with every effort made to capture him, Ned Darrell, with a courage worthy an honorable cause, got his men into the boats, and shoved off; for he realized the madness of trying to take the vessel with more men to fight than he had with him.

As they pulled away a volley followed them, and the Royal Dean gave orders to pursue at once in the boats; but the men on board were soldiers from the fort, not sailors, and it was some time before they could launch a boat, and get into the one left by the pirates.

"Oh, if I had had a crew of seamen on board, not one of those devils should escape," cried Royal Dean to Carl Manners, who through all had won the admiration of both officers and men.

"They did not seem at home, sir, aboard ship; but they fought bravely, and saved the cutter," answered Carl.

"Yes, but you saved the cutter, Manners, and I owe you a life-long gratitude: hurry up there, men or those fellows will reach the Narrows before you get off—forward there!"

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the shrill voice of Brete Fairfax.

"Turn that bow gun upon those boats and sink them."

"Ay ay, sir," came in the middy's cheery tones, and soon after the cutter trembled under the discharge of the heavy gun.

"Bravo! Fairfax, you've sent one down to the bottom; now Murdock, pull after those pirates!"

"Shall I go in the boats, sir," asked Carl.

"No, Manners, it is best for you to remain on board, and to-morrow night you can leave: now go into the cabin, for I notice a boat coming out from the shore, and some of those officers may be along, and I don't wish you to take any chances, notwithstanding your good disguise."

Royal Dean grasped the hand of the youth as he spoke, and while Carl entered the cabin, he hailed the approaching boat.

"Boat ahoy!"

"Ho the Sea Wizard; can we come on board?"

"Ay ay, colonel, and glad to see you," answered Royal Dean, recognizing the voice of the old landlord.

"Well, you've had a red time of it here," said the colonel, as he crossed the gangway.

"Indeed we have, for I've lost a dozen brave fellows, and twice as many wounded; but we saved the ship and punished the pirates badly."

"Pirates! pirates, Captain Dean?"

"Ay, pirates, for such they were, and intended seizing the cutter and running her to sea under the black flag."

"This is marvelous; but I am glad you are not wounded, captain; but what about your officers?"

"Midshipman Field was killed, I regret to say, and an officer from the fort badly wounded; but we must expect such a fate; but, give my regards to the young ladies please, and say that their friends are safe."

The colonel promised to do so, and after placing his inn at the disposal of Royal Dean, for the wounded, if he cared to send them ashore, he returned homeward, where a large crowd eagerly awaited them.

But the old landlord was out of sorts with the villagers, on account of their tardiness in volunteering to go with him to the cutter's aid, and he answered in a surly tone:

"The cutter was attacked by pirates, and beat them off handsomely; but she might have been taken had she depended upon the patriots ashore here to aid her crew; there were many killed, more wounded, and it's to be hoped the pirates will be hanged; come, Ben, let us go up and take a little something warm, in honor of Captain Dean," and the colonel led the way into the tap-room, where Bessie, who had been aroused, was dispensing "something warm" to thirsty villagers.

Dashing off his drink, to the health of the cutter's commander and crew, old Ben started to his lonely home beyond the hill.

It was a neat little cottage, surrounded by a garden, and could have been made a most comfortable and pretty home under the refining influence of a woman's presence; but since his daughter had deserted him some years before, the old man had had no heart to keep the place in repair. "It will outlast me," he was wont to say, "and when I'm gone, I don't care what becomes of it."

As he now approached the place, following the curving beach from the inn, he saw two forms standing by the little gate, and their voices distinctly reached his ears.

Instantly he sprang to the shadow of a clump of trees near by, and every word uttered by the two sunk deep into his heart.

"I tell you, Alston Brooks, I have tracked you here, for I know that Kate left me for you," said one in an angry tone.

"And I admit it, Flash Ringold; she left the man that had wrecked her life, and who had never kept his sworn word to make her his wife, but who had dragged her still deeper down in the mire of sin to come back to her girlhood love—to me, who had loved her through all."

"And she is here now?"

"No, but she is under my protection."

"Bah! let me see her, and she will come back to me."

"Oh no, my fancy gambler, the darkness has been raised from her eyes, and she hates you, and will never return to you."

"And you lie, Alston Brooks, for if I am a gambler, I am not, like you, a convict."

"Hold! Flash Ringold; I went to prison, I admit but before God, I was innocent of the charge of forgery against me, and upon his death-bed the man confessed that he was guilty, and laid the charge against me."

"You know that I was pardoned out of prison; but alas! my heart was crushed for good, and I went in the downward path to the devil; but now I am a reformed man, and I tell you, incarnate fiend that I know you to be, the woman you seek is now my wife."

"Liar again," hissed the gambler.

"I swear it; Kate Burdick married me this very night, and I came down here in yonder boat to see her old father, and ask him if he will receive her into his heart once more, and you, Flash Ringold, I warn never to cross her path or mine again."

"Alston Brooks, I came here to-night to seek Kate Burdick, and I tell you frankly, be she your wife or not, she shall return to me."

"Beware, Ringold, for I am a desperate man."

"What! do you threaten me?"

"Ay, I threaten you, and I warn you."

"You will not give her up then?"

"Never!"

"Do you love her enough to fight for her?" sneered the gambler.

"Try me."

"I will; are you armed?"

"Do you think I am a fool?"

"Good! stand by yonder post, and I will remain here; we will count together, one, two, three, and at three fire."

"It will suit me."

"Hold! gentlemen, I have a word to say just here."

Both men started, turned quickly, and beheld old Ben Burdick confronting them.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MIDNIGHT DUEL.

WHEN the fancy gambler, who was known as Flash Ringold, and the man Alston Brooks, with whom Fate had so cruelly dealt through life, beheld the form of the outraged father standing before them, his form drawn up to its full height, and his eyes flashing, they were silent, for the one shrunk back in real terror, and the other, though apparently surprised, stood firm; but both were silent, and it was a relief when Ben Burdick spoke.

And what he said, though his voice was low, each heard, and each felt, though with different emotions.

"The moonlight tells me upon whom I look, and your words told me that one was a villain, the other a man with a noble heart, whatever his misfortunes might have been. Need I say to you, thou accursed gambler, that you are a vile scoundrel?"

"Hold! old man, your gray hairs alone protect you," cried Flash Ringold, stepping forward.

"Liar, you would hesitate neither at age or youth, were your heart not craven; did my poor child find mercy when she, an innocent girl, pleaded to you?"

"Oh, no! But I would have taken your life

had not I pledged my word to her I would spare you; I pledged that word to spare her life, for she vowed she would die by her own hand, but from that day our paths in life diverged, and I feared our graves would even be far apart."

"But now a deluge of joy floods my heart, for she has asked to come back to me, and she shall; but you, thou accursed hound of hell, what do you here in the shadow of my home?"

"Begone! or I will forget that vow and strike you dead where you stand, for every gray hair in my head you put there, and every sorrow in my heart you planted the seed of!"

He stepped forward and the gambler shrunk from before his flashing eyes, but recovering his self-possession, he said, in a sneering tone:

"All right, old man; we part now, but don't dog my steps, would you save your worthless old life."

He turned to go, but in an instant Alston Brooks confronted him, saying in a way that could not be misunderstood:

"I believe we have an engagement, Mr. Ringold."

"I will meet you at another time, sir," was the haughty reply.

"Oh, no; this is the time, and Mr. Burdick can act as the second for us both; will you not, sir?"

"Willingly; for though my vow prevents me killing that vile wretch, I will be more than willing to see him die at your hands," said the old man, with the intensest hate.

"So be it, as I see I am forced into this duel."

"Oh, no, it was your own proposition, and had not Mr. Burdick come upon us as he did, you or I would have been dead ere this; now, sir, take your stand, and Mr. Burdick, will you give the word?"

The gambler saw that there was no chance for him but to fight, for he knew he was in the presence of two desperate men; but a crack shot under all circumstances, he trusted in his deadly aim to rid himself of the man who now professed to be the husband of Kate Burdick, for in spite of his treatment of her, he loved her with all the affection one of his nature was capable of, and did not doubt but that he could make her return to him once Alston Brooks was out of the way.

With a sneer upon his face he followed Ben Burdick and Brooks down to the very edge of the water, when the old man remarked:

"This is a good place, for the tide is coming in to wash away any blood-stains, and should either be killed, he can be thrown in, and his death will be set down to the attack upon the cutter."

"A good idea," sneered the gambler, and the two men took their positions, ten paces apart.

"Are you ready?" asked Ben Burdick, abruptly.

"Yes," simply said Flash Ringold.

"I am," was the quiet response of Alston Brooks.

"Fire!"

With the word both pistols flashed, and then both men remained standing.

"You are not crack shots," said the old fisherman, quietly, and then he added:

"Try again."

But as he spoke Flash Ringold sprang into the air and then fell heavily upon his face.

"Ha! I knew I could not have missed him, and his bullet scathed my temple," said Alston Brooks.

"He is dead; shot through the heart; so ends his crime-stained career. Here goes!" and with little ceremony old Ben Burdick raised the body and threw it out into the water, where it fell with a heavy splash.

"With him perish the sin of my child," he said, bitterly.

"Amen!" came in the deep tones of Alston Brooks, and as the body sunk from sight the two men turned and walked back toward the cottage in silence.

At the gate they paused, and the young man said:

"And shall I bring Kate, my wife, home, again?"

"Oh, yes, and never a word of reproach shall she hear from me. When will she come?"

"My boat lies yonder near the inn; I will return for her to-night."

"So be it, for my old home needs sunshine across its threshold."

"And of this night's work she must not know."

"Never. If his body is found, he of course was among the pirates attacking the cutter," said the old man, significantly.

"It is best so," and Alston Brooks turned away, and in a few moments after his cat-rig sailboat was launching along on the way to the

city; but within three hours he was on his way back, and by his side sat Kate, now his happy wife, and just as the sun arose above the Long Island hills and glistened upon the white walls of the little cottage, the excited and erring woman crossed the threshold of her father's house, and once again shed joy into the heart that had so long been dark and gloomy.

CHAPTER XX.

CARL MAKES A DISCOVERY.

WITH the dawn of day, following the night attack upon the cutter, Royal Dean sent his wounded men ashore, buried the dead, and then went to make his official report to the admiral, telling him the information of the attempted seizure had been secretly brought to him, and that it alone had saved the vessel from capture.

The unsuccessful pursuit of the pirates was also made known, for when they landed and took to the woods, Lieutenant Murdock was compelled to give up the chase, though at daylight, soldiers from the fort were sent to scour the island in every direction.

The admiral complimented the young officer, upon his victory, and gave him orders to detach a certain number of men from each vessel in the harbor, for a crew, telling him that the Sea Wizard should not long remain idle.

That night the cutter had her full complement of officers and men, and it was with a contented mind that Royal Dean went into his cabin and called to Carl Manners to come out of the cabin and join him.

"I did not say who you were, Carl, but I hinted that you were a young friend I would one day ask a favor for, and after you have won a name, which you soon will do, I will place the full facts before the President and ask for your pardon."

"You are very kind to me, Lieutenant Dean," said Carl, with feeling.

"Ah no, for you have done far more for me than I can ever repay; but I must tell you that I saw your sister and Miss Agnes on my way back, and told them all, and they witnessed the whole combat from their window, for they had not retired."

"They sent their love to you, and hoped to learn good news about you before long; now you will have to leave the cutter, but I will have Midshipman Fairfax take you down to Amboy, or any place you deem it best to land."

Carl thanked the captain warmly for his kindness, and the boat having been called alongside, he wrung the hand of his friend in parting, and went over the gangway and seated himself by the side of the gay young middy.

"You will carry Lieutenant Carleton to any point he may wish to land, Mr. Fairfax."

"Ay, ay, sir; give way, men!" and the boat was rowed away at a strong, steady stroke.

"As I know the shore well will you resign me the helm?" asked Carl, and the midshipman relinquishing the tiller, the poor outcast headed close in toward the beach, and at a point directly opposite the cottage of old Ben Buntline.

A bright light streamed from the door and windows, and distinctly seen were three forms, two of which Carl knew well, and the third he was certain was the man who had aided him two nights before, and was disguised as Gil Wright the detective.

The other two were old Ben and his daughter Kate, and it looked like a happy home.

"Thank God, they at least are happy; but will joy ever come to my poor heart, I wonder," he said sadly, and his face grew dark and stern as the boat glided by the Keel and Anchor Inn, and he remembered the scene enacted before its doors that had sent him to prison, and his poor mother to her lonely grave beyond the hill.

Suddenly an impulse seized him to visit that lonely spot; to kneel by the side of the mound that covered the form he had loved so well, and he put his helm down quickly and the bows of the boat grated upon the beach.

"Mr. Fairfax I thank you, sir; this is as far as I will trouble you to go; men, here is something for a glass of grog to drink my health with," and touching his naval cap, for he still wore the uniform and beard, as Royal Dean had insisted upon it, he sprang ashore and walked quickly up the hill, while the midshipman took the tiller and started on his return to the cutter, remarking half-aloud:

"That is the gloomiest shipmate I ever sailed with; but he's got nerve, and fought like a tiger last night; but I'd give a month's pay to learn what the tie is that binds him and our handsome Captain together, and I'd bet a like sum it's a petticoat."

Then turning to the crew of the boat, he continued:

"Lads, we're off duty to night just six hours sooner than I expected, so we'll put back to the Keel and Anchor and I'll treat you to a glass all round."

This suggestion met with unanimous consent, and half an hour after Carl Manners left the boat, the middy and his crew were enjoying themselves over a glass of the old colonel's prime ale, while Kate Fairfax was chatting with the landlord, yet keeping a weather eye open to catch a glimpse of Clarette and Agnes, whom he had often observed through his glass, and wanted to have a closer look at, for, as he expressed it:

"Captain Dean's visits ashore so often have got something to do with one or the other of those petticoats, and I'd like to get a glimpse of them, just for his sake."

But leaving the sailors drinking at the Keel and Anchor, and the middy spinning yarns to the old colonel, I will follow in the path of Carl Manners after he left the boat.

The spot where he landed was a lonely one, and along the hillside, some thirty feet above the beach, ran the highway that encircled the upper end of the island, and upon which here and there fronted a farm.

After a short walk along this road he came to a little vale running back into the hills, and before him was an humble church, where the islanders were wont to worship, and beyond it lay the resting-place of the dead, their stone tombs looking grim and ghastly in the moon-light.

He knew the spot well, for often had he been there to attend the last rites to some neighbor that had passed away forever, and there also his father lay buried, and he knew that by his side he would find the grave of the mother whom he had so loved, and whose deep affection for him had broken her heart at the thought that her son had been imprisoned for life.

Bounding over the low fence he wended his way among the graves, until he came to a willow tree, which his mother had planted years before, and beneath its drooping branches he knew rested the ashes of his father, and now beside them, he saw the new-made mound where slept the one who had guided his steps from childhood to manhood.

The moon streamed brightly down upon the scene, and within that sequestered vale there rested a silence that could be felt; but his heart and soul were in the graves with the dead, and in bitter grief he stood, while bitter memories crowded upon him in a flood that hung like a weight of iron upon his heart.

"Mother, mother, men call me a murderer, a criminal, a convict; but you know that I am not guilty at heart of one act to bring dishonor upon the name my father willed me, and that cruel fate alone has made me what I appear to the world."

"And now, a hunted fugitive, an outcast, homeless and a wanderer I stand by thy grave, to look down upon the earth that covers your form, before I fly from these old familiar scenes to save my life."

"Ah, me, it were better, perhaps, that I rested here by your side, for then all struggle and sorrow would be over; but no, I will yield to no weakness, I will fight against fate and my foes, and here I vow to win a name that shall wash off the stain now upon me, and make me honored among my fellow men."

He leaned against the tree, his face buried in his hands, and for some time he remained thus; but, then he started and looked quickly behind him, for the sound of voices reached his ears, and he beheld, coming into the church-yard, three men.

Did he leave the shadow of the tree they would see him, and he had no desire to have a scene of trouble there; besides, why were they coming to that desolate spot?

That he would discover, and he looked around him for a hiding place.

And good fortune favored him, for just beyond, a few yards, where the moon cast the heavy shadow of the willow tree, he beheld an open grave, the earth newly turned up to receive a human form upon the morrow.

Carl Manners was not superstitious, and he was utterly fearless, and keeping the trunk of the tree between him and the approaching men, he sprang forward, and dropped down into the grave, crouching back in the shadow as far as possible and waiting.

Nearer and nearer came the sound of voices, and then he knew that they had stopped by the side of the brick and stone tomb that was above his father's grave, for one said rudely:

"I stop here, for we are far enough in this

dismal place now, and it does not bring up pleasant thoughts."

"No indeed, and I don't see why Devil Dick made the rendezvous here," said a second voice, and then a third person answered sternly:

"He appointed this place because I did not care to go so far as the Haunted Home, and he knew no one would interrupt us here."

"I guess not, captain; I wouldn't," said the first speaker.

"One voice I recognize: it is Ned Darrell, the others I do not know; it is a fortunate thing I came here, and if I am not discovered, I will make a discovery," muttered Carl Manners, crouching still closer down in his loathsome hiding-place.

A few words more of conversation followed, but unimportant, and then the voice which Carl had recognized as Darrell's said:

"There comes Dick now."

The heavy step of some one approaching Carl could now distinctly hear, and a moment after Darrell called out:

"Here we are, Devil Dick."

"Ah, I feared you might not have come: well, what news, captain?" said the man whom Carl had seen in the Haunted Mansion, and again upon the cutter's deck, fighting like a demon.

"Hugh Trevor has put to sea," answered Darrell.

"And in what?"

"His own schooner; but he says it won't be long before he gets a faster and a better one."

"I was afraid his father's influence would make Government give him the Maid of Perth."

"No, she will be ours, for she has been overhauled, and I think the admiral intends using her in conjunction with the cutter, so we must act at once."

"Where is she?" asked Devil Dick.

"Anchored in East river, and she has but half a dozen men on board."

"Then say to-morrow night to cut her out."

"No, the day after to-morrow night, for I have a plan on hand to take a fair passenger with me."

"Captain Darrell, I do not wish to dictate, but you had better let women alone."

"Not this one; she is to be my wife."

"Ah! it is Claudine?"

"No, it is not Claudine; it is Madge, the Fair Maid of Perth."

"An unwilling bride, I fear."

"Nevertheless my bride she shall be; say day after to-morrow night, and we will rendezvous at the old inn opposite Blackwell's Island at nine o'clock, for the schooner is anchored just above the city* and close in shore; but there are two men I would like to find."

"Who are they, captain?"

"One is a mere boy; that young Carl Manners, who so gallantly escaped from prison the other night; he knows this coast well, and I would make him an officer in spite of this trick he served me and old Ferris; the other is Alston Brooks, a fair sailor, and as game as a tiger."

"Would they go with you?"

"Why of course, for one is an escaped convict and the other a pardoned one, and I would give much to have them as my junior officers; if I do not find them my two friends here I have promised the berths."

"Hope you won't find them, captain," said one of the men who had come with Ned Darrell.

"It's a pity about the cutter, Darrell," suddenly said Devil Dick.

"It's d-d good luck we were not all taken; I have not gotten over that run yet, and if it hadn't been for an oyster sloop we would have been taken; but what a surprise, when we thought we had it all our own way; but I hope to meet Royal Dean yet, when I have an armed deck beneath my feet."

"I hope so too; but if it's arranged for day after to-morrow night, at the old East River Inn, nine o'clock, don't let us linger here," said Devil Dick.

"So I say too, for grave-yards are unhealthy at night," put in one of Darrell's companions, while the other added:

"I don't fancy them by daylight," Ned Darrell laughed lightly and then said:

"Well, be there promptly, and Brandt and Sylvester here will meet you with their men, and you can run down to the schooner."

"And you, captain?"

"Will be on board, with the fair mistress of the schooner."

"Better drop that part of the affair, Darrell."

*At the time of which I write New York city did not extend above Chambers street.—THE AUTHOR.

"I know my own business, Dick Duncan," was the sharp retort and Devil Dick made no reply, other than:

"I will be there; good-night."

He strode silently away, and a moment after had Darrell and his companions retraced their steps toward the highway.

But hardly had they disappeared from sight, when out of the open grave arose the dark form of Carl Manners, and at a rapid pace he left the church-yard, his mind evidently made up as to the course he was to pursue.

CHAPTER XXI. A WOMAN'S PLOT.

WITH his daughter once more in his home, and the man whose love for her had been true through good and ill repute, her husband, old Ben Burdick seemed happy once more, and when Carl Manners suddenly appeared in the doorway, half an hour after leaving the grave-yard, he gazed in upon a cheerful scene.

A knock at the door brought all to their feet, and a look of anxiety swept over the handsome face of Kate, as she glanced toward her husband, for the wild life he had led caused her to dread evil to him.

Seeing an officer in naval uniform there, Ned Buntline said pleasantly:

"Come in, sir; come in, for those who serve their country are ever welcome in the home of Ben Burdick."

"Thank you, sir; I called to see you, and also Mr. Brooks, while I have also something to say to your sweet daughter here," and closing the door behind him Carl continued:

"But as I am among friends I may as well remove my disguise."

"Carl Manners!"

The name was upon each lip, and Alston Brooks and old Ben sprang forward and grasped his hands warmly, while Kate, with rare presence of mind, closed the shutters, and turned the key in the door.

Then Carl in earnest tones thanked the three for all they had done for him, and made known the discoveries he had ferreted out at the Haunted Mansion, and how he had warned Captain Dean of his danger, though he did not compromise the young naval officer by saying that he had known who he was.

"But now I have another important matter to relate, and I need your aid to circumvent it," continued Carl, and he went on to relate all he had heard at the church-yard, to the surprise of his listeners.

"That Ned Darrell will run his neck into a noose yet; but how are we to circumvent him?" said Ben Burdick.

"I can go on board the cutter, and—"

"No, Carl Manners, you must do no such thing, for you give your thunder to others, as you did in capturing the smugglers, and in saving the cutter: act for yourself in this matter, for you have the skill to command and the nerve to execute," and Kate spoke with earnestness that made Carl feel that he was not a mere youth, but one who had it in him to make a name for himself.

"Kate is right; you lead, and I will follow," said Alston Brooks.

"And I too," chimed in old Ben with enthusiasm.

"No, father, you have me to look after now; but let Carl and Alston go, and my advice is that if Ned Darrell takes the schooner to go privateering, you take it from him and go privateering."

Carl uttered a cry and bounding forward seized Kate's hands in both his own, while he cried:

"Fool that I was not to think of it before; ah, Kate, you have made a man of me and I will do as you say; but I hate to take poor Madge Ferris's vessel, for she and her father, you say, were the ones who came to you to aid me out of prison."

"Better let the schooner go as a privateer, in which she can claim her share of prize money, than lose the craft altogether."

"I tell you, Carl Manners, you have it in you to command a great name for yourself; Alston is a good sailor and can go as your lieutenant, and he can get a crew in one day in the city; can you not Alston?"

"Easily; I know just what men to get, and we can cut the schooner out ahead of Ned Darrell."

"No, no, I would not do that; let him steal the schooner and we can recapture her after she has passed the forts in the Sound," said Carl.

"But how can that be done?"

"That we must figure out; now, Mr. Brooks, I wish to run down to Amboy to see Captain

Ferris, and I want Mr. Burdick's boat, and you to accompany me, for we will go from there to the city and begin the good work at once."

"I will go willingly; but I have Bolton's yacht anchored yonder in the cove; it is the same I had the other night, and she sails like a witch."

"Then we will go at once," and after a few more words of conversation they departed, both Kate and her father sending after them a fervent

"God bless you, boy!"

Three hours after they landed in Amboy, and knocked loudly at the door of the mansion, where dwelt Madge, the maid of Perth.

"Who are you? Friends or foes?" asked Captain Ferris, as he opened an upper window, and thrust his head and an old blunderbuss out together, for the loud knocking had aroused him from sound slumber.

"Friends, captain; don't fire, for that old thing would kill and bury us."

"Ah, that is you, is it Brooks?"

"Ay, ay, come down and let us in, for the morning air is chill, and a glass of grog would make us happy, for we've come a long way."

Five minutes after the door opened cautiously, for those were troublous times, kind reader, and Alston Brooks and Carl Manners were admitted, and a most warm welcome did the latter receive when the old captain discovered who he was.

"I'll call Madge in, for she is awake and will wish to congratulate you."

"And I wish to see her, to make known to her the intentions of an old beau regarding her," said Carl, and a few minutes after the Maid of Perth entered, looking as bright as though she had not been roused from a sound sleep.

After the greetings were over Carl told of his adventure in the grave-yard, and the intentions of Ned Darrell regarding the Fair Maid of Perth, and her namesake the schooner.

Madge listened in silence to all, and then said with deep feeling:

"The despicable wretch, to plot against a woman, but it is like Ned Darrell."

"Ah, if I were a man, he should suffer for this."

"We have arranged a plan to take the schooner from him," said Alston Brooks.

Quickly Madge turned, her eyes flashing, as she answered:

"Carl Manners, I have refused offers of double the worth of that schooner; but if you will save her from Ned Darrell, and capture him, I will give her to you, and if you cannot make a name in a craft so fleet, I am mistaken in you, and let me tell you that father already has her papers as a letter of marque."

Alston Brooks and Carl exchanged quick glances with each other, and then the latter said:

"I will frankly confess, Miss Madge, that after we took her from Ned Darrell and his crew of pirates, we intended to put to sea in her and go to privateering, making you, as the fair owner, one claimant of one-third the prize money."

"A splendid idea; but where will you get your guns to arm her?" asked Captain Ferris.

"With the fleetest craft afloat and a gallant crew, we can take them, for there are many English privateers cruising in our waters," answered Carl.

"Then success attend you; but do you know how Darrell expects to get Madge in his power?"

"No, captain, unfortunately he did not say; but I would advise that you and Miss Madge go to the city with us."

"Ah no! I will not be caught napping, I assure you; but let me get you some breakfast, for day is breaking I see," and Kate left the room, and the three men plotted and planned together until summoned to the substantial meal that had been prepared, and to which Carl and Alston Brooks did full justice.

CHAPTER XXII.

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT.

DARKNESS was just creeping over land and water, when the midshipman, who was in command of the beautiful schooner, Maid of Perth, came out of his cabin and glanced around him, as the vessel lay quietly at anchor.

"This is dull duty, coxswain, and this craft is too good a one to lie idle here, when she could skim the seas with an armed deck and gallant crew," said the young man to one of the four seamen who acted as guard of the schooner.

"You are right, sir; but arn't they going to do something with her, sir?"

"I hope so; you know Government has just had her overhauled, and she is provisioned for a

cruise, Captain Dean told me when he ordered me aboard yesterday; but I guess the Sea Wizard will go to sea, and this vessel take her place; but is not that a boat approaching?"

"Yes, sir, and it's a man-o-war's boat; will you hail, sir, for she's headin' here?"

"Ahoy the boat!" sung out Brete Fairfax.

"Ho! the Maid of Perth; I have orders for you, sir," answered a clear voice from the boat.

"Ay, ay, come alongside," and the midshipman walked to the gangway just as a tall officer sprang on deck.

"Ah, Lieutenant Carleton, it is you; come into the cabin, please."

The supposed lieutenant followed the midshipman into the cabin, and taking a seat opposite to him at the table, said firmly:

"Mr. Fairfax, a few nights ago I saved, as you know, the cutter from capture by pirates, and I have now come on board this schooner to do a like service, for to-night about ten o'clock she will be boarded by some sixty desperate men under the same daring leaders who led the attack upon the Sea Wizard."

"This is astounding news, lieutenant, and I have but four men, who accompanied me from the cutter yesterday."

"In my boat alongside I have a dozen, and on the point of land opposite, on the Long Island shore, are sixty brave fellows whom we will ferry across as soon as I have arranged my plan with you."

"And that is, sir?"

"That we hide in the hold, and that you hold the deck and allow the pirates to board without resistance, for they will pretend to be man-of-war boats, and they will force you, under penalty of death, to give them the signals to run by the forts up the Sound."

"They can never force me to forget my duty, sir," promptly said the brave midddy.

"They will attempt it, and I wish you to do as they request—"

"Why, Lieutenant Carleton, would you have me—"

"You forget, Midshipman Fairfax, that myself and crew will be concealed down in the hold; once beyond the forts and I will come on deck with my men and capture them, for one-third of their number are our own crew."

"A good idea, sir; but would it not be best not to pass out of range of the forts?"

"I have my reasons, sir, for wishing to pass them."

"I have nothing to say, sir, for you are my superior and I obey."

"You shall not be the sufferer, I promise you; now I will have my men come on board, and send the boats back after the others."

Silently the men boarded the schooner, and crept down into the hold, and in half an hour there were sixty brave tars between decks, impatiently awaiting the time for them to act.

With monotonous step Brete Fairfax paced to and fro the quarter-deck, and turning to the coxswain, to whom he had before spoken, he said:

"It's not so dull now, coxswain, and it appears as if things were going to be lively."

"Yes, sir, there will be stirring times; but there come the boats, sir."

"You are right; now you and your mates do as I directed, and we'll give those fellows a surprise, worse than they got on the Sea Wizard the other night."

Three long boats were now drawing rapidly near the schooner, and a voice in the leading one hailed:

"Ho the schooner!"

"Ahoy!" answered the midddy.

"The admiral has sent a crew to man the Maid of Perth."

"The same old story," said the midddy, in a low tone, to the coxswain, and aloud he called out:

"Ay, ay, sir; come aboard."

He approached the gangway to greet the officer in charge, and in an instant found himself in a clutch of iron, while the coxswain and his three companions were overpowered as quickly, and without a shot or a word to betray what had occurred.

"Now up with that anchor, men, and, Mr. Duncan, dress her up lively for a dance up the sound," called out Ned Darrell, and seeing that the crew were working with a will, he turned to the midshipman, who had been heavily ironed and was standing near.

"Now, my young fledgling, if you value your life, you will signal this craft past the forts."

"And if I refuse?"

"You shall die, for the stars and stripes must give way over this deck for the black flag of the pirate."

"And you will kill me if I do not run you by?"

"I will, by Heaven; for the forts would soon knock the beauty off this pretty craft. Well, what do you say?"

"Will you release myself and men as soon as we have passed the forts?"

"Yes; I will set you adrift in a boat, so get your signal lamps ready."

"My hands are in irons, and I will need the coxswain and another man to aid me make the signals."

"Uniron this man and two of his crew: by Heaven! but this schooner flies like a bird, Dick," and Ned Darrell turned to Devil Dick, who just then approached.

"She does indeed! but where is your bride, the Fair Maid of Perth?"

"I must be content with her namesake, for, curse her, Madge Ferris gave me the slip; but I will yet have her in my power: but how many men have we, Dick?"

"Fifty-five all told, and twenty of those are fellows I had to pick up at the last moment, for the Sea Wizard sickened many of the old crew."

"Who is that large heavily bearded man at the wheel?"

"Ah he's a fellow that came to me and said poor Bolton had intended bringing him upon the Sea Wizard attack, but he got left: he calls himself Al Black, and he got the new men for me, and I think he'll prove a good one: but where are we going to get our guns, captain?"

"Oh that is all arranged, Dick, for near where I was born, on the Kennebec, is an old fort, in which are some dozen good guns, and we can run down there and take them on board by night, and they will help us to capture better ones; but here we are near the fort—now, sir, if you love life do your duty," and Ned Darrell turned to Brete Fairfax, who stood near with two of his men, and at their feet were several blue, red and white lanterns.

A cable's length more and there came a flash from the fort, and the roar of a heavy gun.

"That is the signal to heave to; now, sir!"

The midshipman made no answer to the pirate captain, but raised a red light and swung it around his head rapidly, his two aids, at a low order from him, also swinging the other lanterns.

"The signal is given, sir; now release myself and men according to promise."

"As soon as we are out of range, young sir, and bear my compliments to Captain Royal Dean, and tell him that Captain Ned Darrell has avenged himself upon him for his capture of this very vessel once, and the reception he gave us on the Sea Wizard the other night!"

"I'll tell him, sir, and know that he'll be glad to meet you at sea sometime; we are out of range now," Brete Fairfax added some time after, when the forts could be only indistinctly seen in the distance.

"Ay, ay, at the wheel there! Bring her up into the wind!"

The bearded man at the wheel rapidly obeyed, while the crew sprang to their posts to work the sails; but above the fluttering of canvas and creaking of blocks, arose a shout from three-score throats, and out of the forward hatches, and the cabin, poured a stream of humanity thirsting for the deadly fray, while one-third of the pirate crew threw themselves flat upon their faces on the deck.

"Here are our foes! at them, men!" yelled Carl Manners, and he sprang into the midst of the pirates, and striking up the pistol leveled at him by Ned Darrell he brought that individual to the deck with one severe blow of his cutlass.

But Devil Dick had rushed among his men, and rallied them quickly to resistance, though he now saw that the man who had called himself Al Black, and the men he had brought with him, were in the ranks of his enemies, and with his beard removed was none other than Alston Brooks.

For a few moments only the fight raged fiercely, and then cries of quarter went up from the pirates, and Devil Dick falling dead under a blow of a cutlass in the hands of Brete Fairfax, the combat came to an end and the good schooner was won.

"Well, this is lucky, for we have not lost half a dozen men, sir," and the midshipman walked up to where the supposed Lieutenant Carleton stood; but he started, as the handsome, youthful face of Carl Manners was turned upon him—a face he remembered well, for he had been on board the Sea Wizard, the night of the chase after the Maid of Perth, and had also been often at the trial, for the killing of Talbot Trevor.

"Mr. Fairfax, I have deceived you, for, as

you see, I am not a lieutenant in the navy, but the escaped convict, Carl Manners; but in my disguise I saved the Sea Wizard the other night, and it has helped now to get possession of this schooner, which you will bear me out in saying I have captured from pirates, not our Government.

"In this vessel I intend to cruise the seas for the enemies of our flag; and—and—to trail to his death, I frankly admit, one man who has injured me more than all others."

Carl paused, and the midshipman, who had listened in astonishment, said:

"Mr. Manners, you have my sympathy, and that of all on board our vessel, I assure you, and I even forgive you the ruse practiced upon me, as I know the schooner would have been in pirate hands now, but for you, and I should have been dead, for without your orders, believing you my superior, I would never have signaled this vessel past the forts; but, Mr. Manners, running to sea now as you do, you will be, pardon me for saying it, looked upon as a pirate, for the schooner does not belong to you, and you hold no commission."

"There you are wrong, sir."

All turned at the low, yet clear voice, and beheld a slender youth, dressed in sailor suit and cap, but with a face that was feminine in its beauty.

"Great God! that is the voice of Madge Ferris!" said Ned Darrell, half raising himself from the deck.

"Yes, I am Madge Ferris."

"The Maid of Perth" came from a dozen lips.

"So called, the Maid of Perth; and, interested in this expedition, and knowing all about it, I disguised myself, as you see, in male attire and came along to witness the success of Carl Manners, to whom I now present the papers of ownership to this vessel; with a free discharge of it, given me by the admiral to-day; and more, into the hands of Carl Manners I give the warrant, authorizing Captain Abram Ferris to send an armed schooner to sea as a privateer, and he sends this gentleman to command in his stead, and here is his letter to that effect: now, Mr. Fairfax, you see that you have done no wrong, and that Carl Manners will not be a pirate."

All were astounded at this revelation, and the voice of Carl Manners failed him when he attempted to speak to the noble girl; but turning to the midshipman, and with an effort controlling his emotion, Carl said:

"Mr. Fairfax, you will please make known to Captain Dean all that has occurred; and into your hands I intrust the prisoners and wounded, for as they are ironed you can easily manage them."

"And I will impose upon the good nature of Mr. Fairfax to let me return with him, for I am no longer a sailor now," said Madge.

"Willingly, Miss Ferris, will I accept the charge, and conduct you safely to your father; and Captain Manners, for I suppose I must now call you so, I will deliver Mr. Darrell on board the Sea Wizard, and I hope, if we meet again, to report to you that he was hanged at the yard-arm for piracy; but, Holy Neptune, how I would like to go with you on this cruise," and the boy in the middle broke out, when he glanced over the rakish schooner and saw the gallant tars around its young commander.

Getting to work with a will it took but a short time to transfer the prisoners and wounded to the pirate boats, which had been in tow astern, and with warm hand-grasps in parting, Carl Manners and Alston Brooks saw the brave midshipman and daring Maid of Perth go over the gangway, and cast loose from the schooner.

Remembering the words of Carl Manners, to trail Hugh Trevor to the bitter end, the Maid of Perth sung out in a clear voice, as the schooner swung around on her course:

"Farewell! and success to the Sea Trailer."

"Ay, ay, three cheers for the Sea Trailer," cried Brete Fairfax, and his four men and Madge joined in a ringing huzzah, while Ned Darrell and his wicked crew groaned in agony of spirit, and bitterly cursed their fate.

And over the moonlit waters of the Sound sped the fleet schooner, like a bird freed from a cage, while upon her deck paced the boy commander, who was to win a name for himself that would go down in history and romance among the daring deeds done in the early days of our nation's existence.

Would the kind reader follow the romantic career of Carl Manners through the bitter struggle of the war of 1812, he will find it in the sequel to the tale just read—"The Sea Trailer; or, A Vow Well Kept"—soon to follow.

THE END.

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